

A HOMELY HERO.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

"WHY, you always have a handsome hero! I wish you would write about a homely man once—or aren't they ever heroic?"

I smile in my friend's fair eager face, but ere I can make the laughing reply, before me rises mentally the wan, sadly pathetic face of Philip Rutledge as I saw him last—a homely face, certainly, not such a one as you would choose for the hero of a pleasing love story; but that life held a sad story, too sternly real to be called romantic by a thoughtful sympathetic heart—and so, as my sweet blue-eyed Franc exclaims about my changed sober looks, I assure her that I have known homely men to be heroic, and that they are usually, I think, more inclined to be so than handsome men, nature being quite a just dispensator.

Every one who knew them was greatly surprised when winsome beautiful Alice Marston married plain reticent Philip Rutledge, who was many years her senior. Many shook their heads prophetically over such an ill-advised union. Some expressed deep sympathy for the joyous maiden, but a child in years, who had so thoughtlessly united with such a stern Bluebeard of a husband as they felt he would make, while many wondered why a man of such superior judgment, old enough to know better, should have made such a fool of himself as to take a mere thoughtless child for a wife; no good would come of it, they were certain of that.

But quiet Philip, unconscious of these dire forebodings, seemed happily content with his lovely girl wife. It was not a palatial home to which he took her, not nearly as rich as the one in which she had been reared; only a humble simple home, made glad and dearer to him than aught or everything else on earth because of the sweet presence blessing and adorning it. But her deft skillful hands enriched and beautified it with many cunning trifles so daintily and wonderfully made, a surprising marvel to staid Philip; for this youthful bride of his was really a genius, evincing a wonderful tact for cutting, making, and all dainty and also homely handiwork of which one would

have deemed her wholly ignorant; a ready adaptability for all things required of a loving, care-taking wife.

And then that cheerful buoyant young heart was a wellspring of hope and animation to reticent Philip, who, from his retiring, reserved habits, was surely dropping into a moody misanthropy when his whole soul was stirred and enlivened by this new inspiration, the sweet tenderness which filled his mature heart for this lovely maiden, to the exclusion of all else.

It was a most absorbing sentiment—this love that had taken entire possession of Philip—one that would, if not properly governed, become exacting in its exclusiveness. Life was an exciting torture to him after this sweet passion took possession of him, till he could raise assuring courage sufficient to tell his love, and it was as great a surprise and wonder to him when she accepted and confessed her love for him as it could have been to any one else.

Yet it was more pity, the pity akin to love, the yielding tenderness of a young girl's heart, which gave him the answer that made him so exultantly happy, than the love which he plead for.

Philip never could realize himself how pathetically pleading his strong voice became, how tenderly eloquent in its tremulousness was every impassioned word breathed so lowly, how charged with compelling magnetic yearning was the ardent gaze accompanying those fondly breathed words, and loving little Allie was nearer the truth than she realized when, in her pliant naive way, clasping her little white hands nervously, those busy little hands that could not keep still, she told her mother of Philip's proposal, ending it with these words:

"And so I just told him I *did* love (you see he felt so *bad* fearing I didn't), and that I'd marry him, in spite of myself; and he was so happy over it!" And she hugged herself fondly because she had made him so happy.

Mrs. Marston looked queerly at her impulsive daughter a moment, then with anxious solicitude asked:

"But, Allie dear, do you really love him? Ought you to marry him?"

Whereat Allie opened her soft eyes widely and answered earnestly:

"Why, yes indeed, mamma; how could I help it when he loves me so? and of course I ought to marry him." And the next moment she was running through the garden with Ponto and the white kitten, in high glee because she had made Philip so happy.

And so she married him, "in spite of herself," his choice, truly—was it hers also? Ah! that matters little, I ween, for it is far better and safer for a woman to be loved than to love, for the clinging tender nature God has given her is, after all, easily won to the strong persistent lover-husband; but woe to the susceptible heart of woman if, making her choice recklessly, she should lavish the tender wealth of her nature upon one who is careless of it. Man may, in like circumstances, seek other cheerful tender society, and in renewed tenderness find a solace for his disappointment; but woman, her desponding tenderness imputed as a shame, becomes either a drooping despondent, or, calling pride to her rescue, clothing herself with haughty indifference, is coldly reckless.

So they were married; and more and more closely, as the years passed, Philip drew his treasure to him, begrudging, jealous of the lightest word or glance given to another.

One after another of the olden associations were dropped, till Alice, the vivacious, society-loving girl, became a very recluse. At first, despite persistent remonstrances from gay friends, Allie seemed happy and content in this romantic seclusion and self-denying devotion to her husband; but the laws of one's nature, either mental or physical, so persistently, daily transgressed, must of necessity in time be felt.

Now, little Allie, although a merry thoughtless girl when she married, had much innate conscientiousness and a most zealous desire to make all around her happy, even to the sacrifice of her own pleasure or convenience, and when all became her husband, she was obedient to every desire, anticipated as it were, every wish. This was, of course, very gratifying and pleasing to the husband, who was really proud of his gifted young wife; but a nature continually pampered, its slightest wish law, even

in one heart, soon loses much of its primitive goodness; for to be truly just and good one must exercise daily the generous quality of giving as well as receiving, for, this most desirable attribute once fallen into disuse, the whole machinery of heart and soul becomes clogged and impaired, missing its highest, most essential good. So, without meaning to be really unkind or unjust, Philip Rutledge became daily more and more exacting, receiving the manifold attentions of his devoted wife as a matter of course, her duty to him. Although she had worked beyond her strength all day in making his home pleasant, mindful ever of his comfort even after two little ones came to claim their share of love and care, his chair was ever ready in the cosiest, warmest place, his slippers, her own gay beautiful handiwork, well warmed beside it when he came in from the frosty air. Then later, when the little ones were sleeping, tenderly cared for by the loving young mother, there was some paper to read, the local current news or a pleasing story, and it was so much more comfortable and pleasant to loiter upon the lounge and receive it all from the musical well-modulated voice of his pretty wife. Among her many accomplishments, or rather innate qualities—for I believe to be a really fine reader one must possess the faculty naturally, in a measure—not the least was that of being a remarkably good reader. Then Allie always seemed so happy to gratify him, to work a little harder in the morning that she might gain time to practise, to play and sing for him a little each evening, that after a while, in his growing selfishness, he came to consider it almost as a special favor to her also, and forgot that it might be possible that this good little wife might really need a little rest, a little loving care and forethought expended for her ease and recreation as well.

I am not trying to prove Philip a cruel husband; it was only thoughtless selfish human nature following the bent of its natural inclinations—for Nature does not allow her laws to be tampered with in any way.

Soon patient, devoted little Allie was gradually brought to a realization of this stubborn fact. It was very pleasant to feel that she was able to minister to the comfort and happiness of her loved Philip so much, and in sweet simplicity of heart she thanked God daily for the many wifely endowments he had bestowed on her, and there was such

a warm glow at her loving heart when at first on entering his cosy home Philip would say:

"Well now, this is something like, to have such a home as this and a pretty wife to care for one's comfort;" and many similar expressions.

But by-and-by, when all this painstaking was accepted as a matter of course, and long-continued seclusion and daily monotonous cares, one unvarying routine of all work and no recreation, began to tell upon a naturally robust constitution and vivacious heart, as such continued repression and self-immolation surely will, Allie surprised herself by long-drawn sighs, and finally she fell to crying most unaccountably, "for nothing," as she told herself, and for which misdemeanor she took herself to task, censuring herself most severely. Ah, little Allie! it was not only loving Nature entering her protest against this unnatural life.

As constant reception for no return for continued blessings and favors is a most lamentable, ungrateful transgression, so, long-continued giving, constantly imparting, never receiving, is also a violation of a duty to one's self. And although devotion to a loved one and self-denying kindness may all be very commendable and sweet, yet Mother Nature insists upon recuperation; as constant friction and no oil is to delicate machinery, so is long-continued thankless duty to a sensitive organization. These nameless indefinable yearnings and vague heart-aches increased with gentle Allie as time passed on; her rounded cheek became paler and thinner, the merry laugh less frequent, the buoyant step slower; yet, as no duty was unfulfilled, no wanted comfort missed, Philip did not notice the change; indeed, Alice scarcely realized it herself.

But Philip, about the time pleasurable duty began to be really burdensome, had a slight bilious attack, and, greatly alarmed, Allie summoned the physician hastily. Philip was promptly prescribed for, and his ailment regarded so lightly by the able physician, that Allie quite resented it when good old Dr. Trafton laid his hand lovingly, in a fatherly way, upon her glossy brown hair, and said:

"Well, little Mrs., seems to me you are looking rather feeble; need toning a little, don't you?" And he took the small white hand in his, the once plump hand grown so

thin and transparent, and placed his fingers firmly upon the fluttering pulse.

Allie drew back abashed, and then there was a resentful feeling in her tender heart to think the usually sympathetic physician had treated Philip's illness, which seemed so serious to her timid heart, so lightly. But the doctor held the hand he had taken firmly, and looking seriously at her a moment, he said:

"You'll take what I send you, wont you?"

"Indeed, sir, I am not sick, and do not need any medicine," she replied, nervously, her soft voice trembling pitifully; and then weak, tired little Allie began to cry, and hurried from the room.

Philip gave a wondering stare, and the doctor looked still more serious. There was a momentary silence, then the physician said to Philip:

"Your wife is very weak, running down fast; she needs rest and change; you must not let her work so hard, cooking niceties to derange your stomach in this way."

Feeling quite indignant that any one should insinuate or think for a moment that his wife was ill-used, Philip made some seemingly indifferent reply. It was really a trying position for a man who certainly intended to be, and really believed he was, a tender, considerate husband to the little wife he was proud and devotedly fond of. Immediately after the doctor's departure Allie returned to Philip with plenty of color in the usually pale cheeks, the flush of wounded feeling. She felt so resentful that she should be brought to Philip's notice in that way when he was ill—it seemed like lack of sympathy for him.

She went quickly to him, an unwonted lustre in the soft eyes, the pretty mouth quivering like a grieved child's, and laying her hot cheek against his, she said in a hurried jerky way:

"I am not sick, indeed I am not, Philip; and I think Dr. Trafton was so disagreeable this morning!"

"Well, never mind. Allie; perhaps he was on the lookout for another patient—and they do say he likes to attend ladies. Of course, if you are sick you must have something done for you at once; but perhaps he made it worse than it really is," Philip replied to the loving protest, a slight sneer accompanying the most offensive part to Allie, for he had suffered a twinge of jeal-

ousy when the physician held Allie's hand longer than it seemed really necessary to him, and was so tenderly sympathetic, although he was her father's family physician and old enough to be her father.

How cold and really harsh the words sounded to Allie in her morbidly sensitive state! for Philip, who had been petted so long by loving Allie, was feeling really aggrieved at the cool treatment he had received from the physician, and his voice and manner were unintentionally constrained. It was just the drop too much for susceptible Allie, the spark to combustibles, and all of the vague yearnings, the intangible doubts, resolved themselves at once into an appalling certainty that seemed to chill her very soul. Philip did not care whether she was sick or not, he did not love her, after all, and with a strange sickening feeling she turned from him, a chilled different feeling from what she had ever experienced in all her life before. And then the days dragged their weary lengths by—no duty was unfulfilled, but life seemed to have lost all of its freshness and zest. Philip was carefully tended till he was well. The doctor brought Allie a tonic which she took in a listless way from him, seemingly listening to his careful directions, but the medicine was set away and not taken.

“Really, Allie, I don't know how I shall get rid of it, but I cannot endure the thought of having any one here beside my own family, and Hal is just the same as a stranger to me if he is my cousin—and yet, I don't hardly like to refuse to receive him, after he has written to me that he is coming. And then, mother thought a great deal of her brother's family; she was there, you know, at the time she died, and they did everything that could possibly be done for her during her last illness. Hal is coming here on business, and in writing to me concerning it, he mentions stopping with me as a matter of course. What shall I do about it, Allie?”

“I do not know, Philip, unless you let him come,” and Allie turned with a weary sigh to hang the little frock she had been ironing upon the rack.

“There is no excuse we could make, Allie? You won't want a stranger in the house, will you?” he asked, a slight impatience manifest in his tone at her weary indifference.

“It makes no difference whatever to me.”

“But your work will be harder,” he said, quickly, almost harshly.

“One more will not make much difference—do not think of that,” she answered more sharply than he had ever known her to speak before, almost a sneering emphasis on the last word, as if increase of work for her could not possibly make any difference to him.

With a wondering stare at her changed appearance, he merely said, indifferently:

“O well, then, I suppose he will have to come.”

As soon as the door closed after him, Allie set her iron down, and clasping her hands, she stood a moment with drooping head in weary listlessness, then sinking down upon the nearest chair, she indulged in one of her now frequent cries for nothing.

Two days later, Philip said, as he entered the dining-room:

“Well, Allie, I expect Harry Verner by the next train.”

“Yes sir,” Allie replied, in the listless tone which had become her wonted manner now, as she seated little Philip at the table.

Philip shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and settling himself forcibly in his seat opposite her, he looked queerly at Allie. He was much annoyed at the thought of admitting a stranger to his quiet home, for he had secluded himself so long from society, that he was becoming quite unsocial and inhospitable, and it vexed him to see Allie so indifferent; he was so accustomed to her ready sympathy. Then he said in a vexed tone:

“How chary you are of words lately, Allie—what ails you? You're as glum as can be—if you are sick you had better have something done at once, for I don't know what we should do if you get fairly down; but perhaps what the doctor said has alarmed you needlessly. Have you taken all of the medicine he brought you?”

“I haven't taken any of it. I am not sick, and do not need medicine,” she replied.

“Well then, I wouldn't have taken it from him, it was needless expense.”

Allie's lip quivered and there was a mistiness about her eyes, but she did not answer or even look up at him, and the meal passed in silence. But not so the evening meal, for a stranger of most prepossessing address graced the meal. He was a handsome man, polite, suave, gentlemanly, a fluent talker,

witty, brilliant, yet exceedingly gracious in his manner toward every one.

His greeting to little Allie, whom he had never seen before, was very cordial.

"So this is my cousin Allie? I am very glad to see you, my cousin," with tender impressiveness, and he stooped and kissed her forehead.

Philip thought him, if the truth must be told, rather bold, a little too demonstrative, and wondered that sensitive Allie took it all so quietly. All, meaning his gay talk and debonaire manner, to which Allie seemed as indifferent as if no gay stranger ate with them.

Ah, Philip, the years of self-immolation and repression have been gradually but surely doing their work in the youthful trusting heart, and the whole soul had fallen into a state of weary apathy. This self-abnegating immolation is all very fine to talk about, and fills many a page in a story book, or column in a paper admirably, and it may do for a while in prosy everyday life when the heart is young, and buoyant hopefulness intact—but as time goes on, and daily cares or weakness impair our vitality, it is impossible for us to wholly ignore self. It is then we feel the need of the upholding, sustaining sympathy of spiritual congeniality, the weariness of constantly giving, imparting, never receiving our needful spiritual nourishment—we can hold up our end, so to speak, but we feel sensibly the want of encouraging vitality at the other end to sustain our flagging energies.

"She's a queer little piece, this wife of Phil's anyway, a real little dummy—can say, "Yes sir," and "No sir," that's all; yet those brilliant eyes of hers seem to speak more than that. Ah, well, I shan't stay here long, and it don't matter whether I have a pleasant hostess or not, but I do like a woman that's got some life and—well, sentiment about her, and if ever I'm fool enough to marry, I'll have a wife that can sparkle sometimes. I thought they said his wife was altogether too young and gay for him—young she certainly is, and very fair, but for gayety she might do for Methusalem," and the young lawyer laughed softly, as his thoughts ended in plunging his handsome aquiline nose into the heart of a creamy rose, as he quaffed the sweets of a tastefully arranged bouquet that adorned the table in his room.

Such a cosy pleasant room as it proved to

be on closer inspection—so many dainty housewifely knickknacks beautified it, and spoke so plainly of some deft womanly hand, a refined delicate taste. As Hal Verner raised his head from a second sniff of the elegant bouquet that filled the room with sweetest fragrance, he murmured:

"By George! this is some different from a bachelor's stuffy quarters. Somebody got this up pretty nice, and it couldn't be Phil, for he never would take that much pains for anyone, and he wouldn't have the knack either, and they haven't any servant, so he told me, and—well, I guess that little dumb wife of his has got a heart, after all;" and there was a half-defined resolution to find out, to study her a bit, in the lawyer's mind.

The next morning he accompanied his cousin to the shop and then he was occupied with his business till nearly noon. Returning, he passed from the hall to the neat little kitchen, drawn by little Phil's prattle as he talked to "mamma."

He found Allie very busy in culinary matters.

She looked up wondering as he entered, asking if he should intrude.

"No, not in the least," the soft low voice replied.

So he sat down near the open window and began to talk with little Phil, watching her furtively as she continued her work calmly, deftly, scarcely noticing him. Seven eggs were broken, one after another into a deep dish, and jumping up hastily, he took the beater from the table, saying, as he held out his hand for the dish.

"Just what I used to do for mother. Please allow me, Cousin Allie, while you get the other fixings ready."

A slight glow came to the pale face, and an amused smile curved the pretty mobile mouth as, getting "the other fixings" in readiness, Allie saw how handily he whisked the eggs to a froth, while little Phil stood beside him, his blue eyes dilating and baby mouth agape at the novel sight of a gentleman in the kitchen helping mamma. He did not say much to her, being wise enough not to make his presence a hindrance by delaying her work; but when he returned to the sitting-room, leading Phil with him, and keeping, amusing him until dinner was ready, there was a satisfied smile about the full mouth, lighting the clear blue eyes to a softer glow.

Hal Verner was most agreeably surprised

when in the evening Allie's husband asked her to sing for them; he listened with extreme satisfaction and pleasure to the simple songs she sang. Allie possessed a softly sweet, tender voice, and the pathetic intonation it had taken of late did not lessen its attraction for him. It was something so entirely new, this unaffected performer, this sweet low voice, so different from the dashing style he was accustomed to; and irresistibly drawn by this subtle attraction, a white manly hand soon, to Allie's surprise, turned the music for her, and a rich tenor, voice, softly modulated to her low tones blent finely and enriched, enhanced the music for her.

Hal Verner spent a little more time before the mirror the next morning, made a more graceful *entree* to the breakfast-room, and his gallant bow and smiling "Good-morning" to the little lady who presided over the daintily served breakfast was politely perfect. You see he had found out that this woman *had a soul*, and it was but right to do homage to it—and then anything a bit odd possessed peculiar attraction for him and became an agreeable study to his naturally inquiring mind, and this pretty, odd, shy lady, so *petite* and childlike, yet so altogether wise and matronly, promised to be a pleasing study to him, and he determined "to draw her out," as he expressed it to himself.

Now Allie, during these years of seclusion and repression, had become exceedingly shy and silent, and his first attempts were not very promising—but when he saw her dark eyes kindle and the pale cheek flush so prettily by the spell of his flowery language, and his expressive singing and reading (you see he had set himself zealously to the task), his failing heart took courage. Soon the spell wrought more definitely—her eye brightened at his coming, her soft smile became more frequent and congenial as he read aloud to her; she conversed more freely with him, and he got a glimpse of the really brilliant intellect, the noble tender heart, and he became correspondingly interested as she was animated by him. There was a strange indescribable exhilaration in this awakening to him.

Of course, you can see just how it terminated without my giving the daily practice which from repetition in various ways must become stale, and I do not possess originality enough to make it anything but tiresome, so I hasten to give you the end.

Hal Verner, alas! was 'not the noble exception to the generality of men—he was not content to awaken and study; like the most of them who begin with curiosity, he soon got himself all mixed up in the study, and began to claim a selfish exacting interest in this soul he had awakened. He was restless and discontented away from the now dear presence, there was a yearning desire to look closer into this awakened heart. It does not matter much just how it happened—there are so many ways for hearts to falter and go astray. They sang tender impressive songs together, many of them of his own selection, sentimental, soul-stirring; and at the close of one of these he dropped his shapely white hands with a crash upon the keys, and repeating the loving refrain tenderly, he looked wistfully, yearningly up at her as she stood beside him. Ah, well—heart spoke to heart as hearts will speak, and timid little Allie shrank back abashed—but he sprang toward her, and in spite of her efforts to prevent it, for a moment he held her clasped closely to him. She began to cry as tender women will when the foolish fluttering heart is too full, and loving Hal got as vigorous a slap as the childish hand could give, as little Phil's baby voice called out, shrilly:

"Go 'way, ugly man, you make mamma cry!"

Alas, for wife and mother! Allie fled, followed by little Phil, but he felt that she loved him, and manlike his selfish heart took fond delight in the thought, unmindful of the suffering it must bring to her. Was she not a wife and mother? And this was a guilty, illegal, dishonorable affection, even though it had crept upon her unawares, involuntarily, as all love should. This man had brightened, beautified her whole life as no one else ever had or could—with him all common things, even, were exalted, beautified, her spirit rose to a higher, more exalted state. Could this affection then be debasing, dishonorable? By existing circumstances it certainly became so. We have no right, by divine law, by common humanity, to seek our own happiness selfishly, to enrich ourselves at the expense of another's happiness; and in this she would be doing a husband who, although he was thoughtlessly exacting, loved her dearly and her only, the greatest wrong a woman can do a man or a man can do a woman. He believed she loved him when she married him,

and if the knowledge came to her that she did not, and another had usurped the delightful study which should have been her husband's sweetest pleasure—the daily awakening and binding by congenial sympathy more closely to him each day the childish trusting heart he thought he had won; even if he thoughtlessly neglected his part—she had no right to turn aside from known responsibilities, unless by that knowledge he should release her. Would she have thought it right in him? Would handsome Hal Verner have borne it very calmly if another man had striven to win a wife of his from her rightful allegiance? I fear, dear Franc, that the greatest mistake of all our mistaken lives is expecting others to do better, to bear more than we possibly could under the same circumstances; if we would only before condemning others strive in every possible way to put ourselves in their places, and not, in the pursuit of our own selfish gratification, lose sight entirely of the golden rule of doing as we would like to be done by—but enough of moralizing, the world is too far advanced for that, and I was going to tell you a story, not read you a homily.

Yet all unacknowledged to her own heart, for days the vague tender yearnings that had filled her unsatisfied heart and soul had been resolving themselves into tangible shape, fastening in tenderness around this handsome auburn-haired man, whose every thought and feeling seemed in such full accord with hers, as to be a daily surprise to her. Here was her king, the vague sweet ideal of her imaginative, susceptible soul, personified; the one of all others, seemingly, to whom her soul responded, and though she fought against it for weary days and sleepless nights, denouncing herself severely, bitterly, driven almost to distraction, still it enchained her. You see, Franc, she was only a weak, frail, loving woman, and God pity her, for the righteous (?) world has no pity for such, only—she should have known better, and her handsome stylish lover may go and do likewise by as many credulous ones as he can, and the world smiles benign approval. God forbid that we should have a voice in the ballot until we become more just and merciful toward our own sex.

Still, Hal Verner lingered, although he knew he ought to go. Nearly a week passed thus, and exulting in the one sweet advan-

tage he had gained, he lounged feverishly for another opportunity to tell her all of his loving feelings.

A letter came requesting his immediate presence elsewhere, and he took the opportunity fate seemed to withhold. Allie went to the parlor, and Hal, who had just entered the house, saw and quickly followed her. Closing the door he began hurriedly, catching his breath gaspingly, with intense excitement, a most passionate, loving appeal from which Allie tried to escape, holding her hands tightly over her flushed face and uttering a tearful protest against this, telling him he must not, shall not talk to her—but catching her he presses her closely to him and, manlike, insists upon her saying she loves him.

Weak little Allie does love him, and for a moment, held in that loving embrace she loses the guiltiness of this sinful love, all but the sweetness amounting to ecstasy, and she gives him loving assurance, whereat his manly heart is transported with delight, but not so another's. There is a quick movement, a gasping breath behind them, they start guiltily away from each other, and catch a glimpse of a white set face, so stern and wan-looking that timid little Allie screams in terror, and then the door, which in their loving absorption has been softly opened unnoticed by them, closes sharply behind Allie's husband.

Allie is wild with guilty affright, terrified, and handsome Hal tries to soothe her, but she turns fiercely upon him, pushing him as she exclaims:

"Don't touch me! Don't speak to me! O, what a wicked, wicked woman I am! We have nearly killed poor Philip! Don't never, never speak to me again! O poor Philip!" And she wrings her little hands convulsively.

There is something exasperating, yet nearly amusing, to handsome Hal in this vehement outbreak, these repellant words to the man to whom she has but just given most tender assurance of fervent affection, and this deep commiseration for another; and there is a vague feeling that womanly hearts are a most perplexing study, really past finding out, as stricken Allie, like a creature despoiled of its young, rushes frantically from the room.

Hal Verner stands irresolute a moment where she has left him, pulling his tawny mustache, an odd, complicated expression

on his handsome face, then he starts forward, muttering:

"This is a fix, anyhow. Wonder what he'll do, anyway? I suppose he ought to kill me, but perhaps she will, and save him the trouble. By George! if I knew what to do anyhow—I do feel confounded mean just now, that's a fact, and—" and here his thoughts are interrupted as Allie pushes the door open and stands before him again, with quivering tremulous face, a terrified look dilating the soft eyes as she glanced hurriedly around the room. Then sinking upon the nearest chair she cried out:

"O, I can't find Philip anywhere!" then she began to sob and cry bitterly.

He looked at her a moment, a soft pitiful light coming to his blue eyes, and then going to her, he leaned tenderly over her, saying softly:

"Don't cry so, Allie! I am sorry I have caused you so much trouble and—"

"But I can't find Philip," she tearfully repeated.

It was a wonder to him that she should desire to "find Philip," and he was vexed that she gave no more heed to him; that she did not realize the trying position in which he was placed, and for which now he was slightly inclined to blame her; for you see Adam is as fond of forbidden fruit as Eve, but if he can manage to shift the burden of his sin, the curse upon her, you may be sure that in nine cases out of ten he will do it, and—well, God bless the *tenth* one. So his tone was a little sharper than usual as he said:

"I suppose I must leave at once; this is no place for me now; and I'm sure I hope you'll find Philip if you want to so much—probably he has returned to the shop."

"Leave!"—only that one word as her hands dropped in her lap, and she raised a tear-wet face, from which all color had fled, to his gaze. There was such a world of pitiful yearning in the startled eyes, such heart-crushing mournfulness in the pathetic voice, so much revealed in that one short word, that Hal Verner was startled, came to a more acute realization of existing circumstances, and there was a slight stammer to the strong fluent voice as, under the gaze of those pleading eyes, he answered to that word:

"Well, you see, Allie, of course it won't do for me to stay here now, and then I've got a letter that makes it imperative that I

should leave if it hadn't been for this—but I do wish he hadn't found it out, because—well, we might have been so much to each other, and now I don't know how we shall manage it."

"Manage it?" she repeated in a dazed questioning way.

"Why, yes; you see I can't give you up, Allie. I want to be a good friend to you and see you as often as I can, but of course it will have to be kept from him."

Allie gave him a wondering stare as she said:

"Why, he knows it now. O poor Philip! Why he looked awfully! O, what shall I do?" And the tears ran fast over her face as she held her clasped hands up imploringly.

That irritated look slightly colored his handsome face again, for you see he was a healthy volatile man, and what was, or rather he expected would be, a pleasing novel study, an agreeable pastime to him, to weak conscientious Allie, under existing circumstances, became, as it were, a matter of life and death, for although she did not love Philip with her whole soul as a woman should the man she marries, yet she possessed an exceedingly tender womanly heart, and a most conscientious sense of duty, of right and wrong, and was very frank and earnest by nature.

He soothed her as well as he could, although that vexed feeling was not lessened by finding that his soft loving words did not affect her as much as he felt they ought to; and so his tone was colder, his manner more distant, as he told her he must bid her good-by, and that he hoped she would not wholly forget him.

Forget him! Then with a sudden revolution of feeling it all came rushing over her, what this handsome man was and had been to her, a dim idea of what her life would be now without him. She had been led blindly on, as it were, by the strength of his will, the strong magnetic power, that irresistible attraction by which he held her, until she stood overwhelmed on the brink of the precipice, confronted by the appalling truth of her situation, yet bereft of all strength or volition to retrace her steps, to take up her shattered life as it was. All feeling and thought became centered in this overwhelming idea of losing him. He saw at once that he had regained the power he feared he had lost, and he took advantage of it, and gained a most tender assurance from

her that she never could forget him, that she could not live without him. So they parted lovingly, with a promise to correspond, he having striven zealously with all his powers of persuasion and loving exactness to overcome her conscientious scruples, to make her look at the matter as he did.

Ah! the wide difference there was in his loving and hers—yet the strongest, most tender affection may be weakened, and the weaker grow stronger.

The fond parting was over, and Allie was left alone with her babies. The lover was gone, but where was her husband? Left by herself, away from the glamour of Hal's fascinating presence, all of Allie's shocked feelings returned with redoubled force, and with them came now a dread amounting to fear of seeing Philip. But it seemed as if this fear was needless, for the day waned and night came on still and sombre, and the supper she had prepared with trembling hands and affrighted heart, remained untasted save by little Phil, for the husband and father came not, and Allie waited nervously, so lonely and heart-depressed, till past the midnight hour, and then, crying, she fell asleep in her chair, and slept till the morning sunlight fell garishly in ruddy streams through the uncurtained window over the pale face. Little Phil called loudly to be taken up, and woke the baby who joined shrilly in the call to mother.

Allie looked around her with a vague consciousness of something amiss, and her gaze rested upon the waiting meal.

"O Philip! Where is he? Where is Philip?" was her wailing cry, as she soothed her baby, and dressed little Phil, and all the details of the previous day's startling revelations came to her mind with forcible dreadful distinctness. She recalled vividly the shocked agonized look Philip's pale face had worn in that glimpse she had of it, and the terrible fear that he had destroyed himself, that her perfidy had killed him, nearly distracted her, but she knew not what to do.

Three days of the most distressing suspense passed, during which Allie scarcely ate or slept; then the postman brought her a letter containing these words:

"MY DARLING WIFE,—God help me! It is dreadful, *dreadful* to give you up, but if I am 'old, cold and selfish,' God knows I *do* love you dearly, and I will not stand in the

way of your happiness. It was a sad mistake, my dear Allie. I should have known better than to expect a young beautiful girl as you were to love one like me. May God bless and make you happy. I never shall trouble you more, except to see that you are well provided for. Pity me a little if you can, Allie, as well as to blame me for blighting your life. Ever yours,

"PHILIP."

And then in deep humiliation of spirit, such self-abasement as she never had known before, Allie bowed her head and wept bitterly. No date, no address whatever. She felt she must—yet how should she?—set about finding him. She sent a little boy to the shop, and he found it occupied by another man who had purchased it lately, he said.

A week of suspense passed, and then another letter was brought to Allie, the cigraphy of which was in a bold dashing hand, elegant easy penmanship, a letter from Hal Verner, and the friendly words, breathing a strong subtle hint of the more passionate current, set susceptible Allie's trusting heart all aflame again; and, like the weak woman she was, she sent him a loving reply, wholly losing sight again of her suffering husband, until, at the close, she told him Philip had left her. Then there was a momentary struggle, a slight return of this consciousness of wrong-doing, but the glamour of infatuation, the spell of intense passion overcame the guilty convictions, and the letter was sent. In less than a week from the time the letter was received Hal Verner came to see her, eager, exultant, for, after all the fear of getting himself "into a fix," there was something exceedingly inspiring to his naturally willful heart in this trespassing upon forbidden grounds, winning another man's wife from him, and by the power of his triumphant tone timid Allie's scruples were for the nonce wholly silenced.

Yet there were times when he was absent that she suffered from deep contrition of spirit, as she ought to, and there was an intense longing to blot out the past year from her life and to hold fast to Philip, of whom she so longed to hear; and then she always felt so sure of his love for her in her inmost heart, even if he was exacting, and she did not love him. With Hal Verner there was an entirely different feeling—when under

the influence of his ardent demonstrations she could not doubt his love for her, but as soon as he left her her heart was tortured by the most feverish uncertainty; distrust would, in spite of her utmost endeavors to prevent it, mercilessly assail her. Then she really pitied poor Philip so—she lived for a year in a delirium of excitement, of tremulous doubts, hopes and fears. Hal Verner's letters were, for a time, all that the most exacting nature could desire, and Allie was not exacting; his visits ardently tender—but by-and-by these visits to which she looked forward so feverishly, became less frequent; increase of business, and other excuses were given—then his letters were more hurried, less satisfying, and the doubts in Allie's loving heart increased.

You can imagine, or have read so many times, if you never have experienced love's vagaries, the tortures of a fickle changeable heart, without my wearying you with needless detail. Men who have many lady-loves should be a little careful in their correspondence. One day, when Allie's heart was disturbed more than usual with conflicting fears, it was for a moment gladdened by the receipt of a letter, the elegant superscription of which made her foolish heart bound joyously and her pale cheek flush so prettily—but only the superscription, for on reading the enclosed letter her soft eyes dilated, her check paled, and her breath came in fitful gasps as she read on to the end, a most ardent love-letter to a young lady, in which he told his loved Flora how impatiently he awaited their approaching nuptials, how wearily the time passed away from her dear presence. Ah, Franc, it must be bitter, humiliating, when we find that we have blighted a life, broken a heart, rejected the true bread of love for its mere husks—that we have lavished the whole wealth of our nature upon a trifle, given the soul's best affection for momentary passion, given as freely to others. Upon the impulse, the suffering of the moment, poor Allie sat down, wrote all the feelings of her heart, and sent it with the letter intended for another. And such a letter as it was! Hal Verner drew his breath sharply, his bearded cheek glowed with intense feeling, his eyes burned and dilated as he got a full glimpse of that loving noble heart. He quickly resolved he would not give her up—here was a wealth of affection he had not dreamed of, something that savored strongly of the

sublime. He left business and started to set matters right, confident of his power to do so, exulting rather than desponding in anticipation of the prospective loving scene. But he had yet to learn, to fully understand the really noble nature he had to deal with. She met him quite calmly, although the visit was entirely unexpected, for you see she had fought her battle with self bravely as soon as the first great shock was over, telling herself she deserved it, all this and much more, for her own perfidy—and then the keenest pain was not for herself, that she had been so basely deceived, but that he had been deceiving others, better women, as she told herself, than she was.

He attempted to draw her to him lovingly, but she repulsed him, and placing a chair for him, she said:

"Now tell me all about it."

He looked at her a moment in a dazed confused way, she the master, he the slave, now, and then he began:

"Well, you see, Allie, I didn't mean any wrong, and—" Here he broke down beneath the indignant scorn of those flashing eyes, and sat in confused silence a moment; then she said, a slight tremulousness in the soft voice, for there was an involuntary pity blending with her just indignation for this man she had loved:

"Go on, please—you were saying you didn't mean any wrong, I believe."

He looked up at her and exclaimed:

"Deuce take it, Allie, don't look at a fellow in that way. I don't see why we can't be as good friends as ever—if—if I do marry her, it needn't make any difference with the relations we hold to each other, as I look at it." And he arose and stood close beside her, essaying to take her hand.

"We look at it differently then, I fear. I made a mistake it seems, too—I thought it was love you had been professing for me, and—"

"Well, of course, I couldn't marry you, Allie, if I did love you, and I don't see why—" And breaking down again, she finished it for him thus:

"You intend to marry this lady, but you would like to visit me as a lover still, or friend, as you call it, that we should be the same to each other as we have been? Do I understand you aright?"

She spoke so calmly, insinuatingly, that he thought love was gaining the ascendancy, and he replied quite buoyantly:

"Why yes, Allie; what should hinder? I can't give you up, you see." And he attempted to put his arm around her, but she drew away from him, and her voice was coldly repellant as she said:

"What should hinder? I will tell you, sir. The scales have fallen from my dazzled eyes. I see this hideous thing in all its loathsome deformity. I realize now that it has fallen to my own lot just how basely I have deceived a heart that trusted me. O poor Philip! my lost, deeply injured husband! Ah! you are deeply, justly avenged! No sir, I shall not help you to deceive another—it may be that your nature requires promiscuous affection, but I do not, cannot believe in promiscuous passion; some persons must suffer deeply thereby, and I will not help to inflict such suffering. I never will intentionally deceive another person while I live."

He stood in silence a moment, flushing beneath her steady gaze, then she said:

"Please sit down a moment."

Thinking she was about to leave the room for something, and being loth to leave her in this unsatisfactory manner, he gladly complied. She turned from him and then quickly passed behind the chair in which he sat. Her voice was low but clear and firm, as she said:

"I am going to bid you good-by, or not you, but my grand, my beautiful ideal, that, for a brief delirious season, I believed was personified in you—and then I want you to leave me, for I never desire to see you again on earth—I understand now just how thoroughly selfish, how heartless you are. I had reason from your ardent demonstrations to think that you really loved me. I see that I was a child, a very simpleton in the ways of the world, in reading human nature, but I deserve this and much more punishment for the grievous sin I have committed. O Heaven! how I am humiliated, debased, at the thought of what you desired me to become! A traitor to all trusting nobleness, a perversion of all pure true innate goodness to sensuality."

"But I did, I do love you, Allie!" he interrupted fiercely, really moved by the husky tremulousness now perceptible in the low sweet voice; but she cried out:

"Don't! don't try to deceive me further! My heart is embittered, humiliated enough for the present. I must ever look at these things differently from what you do. Don't

speaking to me again, please. Don't touch me while I bid you good-by." And as soon as the last word was uttered she put her arms around his neck in a close clinging embrace, and bending her head above his, from the back of his chair she kissed him fervently, repeatedly, upon brow and cheek, such impassioned lingering kisses of yearning tenderness as thrilled his inmost soul. Then she said, lowly, reverently, as one speaks of the dead:

"Good-by, my noble, my brave, my beautiful ideal, my king!" a far-away misty look in the soft eyes, as if speaking to her soul, or some one far removed from earth; then with a start, looking fully at him again, she said, sternly:

"Now go, sir, and try to make her happy. I never desire to see you again."

Hal Verner took his hat and passed out from her presence, his soul in a tumult of conflicting emotions. Out in the air again he took his hat off hastily, as if its weight oppressed him, drew a full deep respiration, then hurried on with rapid strides, striving to distance his thoughts. Some distance away, on the brow of a hill overlooking the little cottage, he stopped, and looking back he stamped his foot furiously, as he exclaimed:

"Curse my luck! What a contemptible fool I've been! Heavens! what a woman she is! I shall carry the memory of those kisses all through my life. Such fire, such softness, such a strange blending of fiery spirit and pathetic tenderness! She might have been so much to me—such variable sweetness would have been so refreshing to my temperament. Pshaw! I shall die of satiety in a year with my insipid bride elect," he muttered, crossly, as he strode on. His mood changing in a moment, his handsome face softened, as he murmured tenderly, "Such kisses!" And raising his hat, he passed his hand slowly, caressingly, over his forehead, across his cheeks where her kisses had fallen, a tender satisfied smile curving his mouth, lighting his blue brilliant eyes as he hurried on to the station, and back to his business and "insipid" lady-love.

You expect my queer little Allie to have a terrible time, a crushing brain fever, or something of the kind, don't you, Franc?

Well, I presume it would be more romantic, sensational; and I must wish, although it may seem a very unfeeling wish, that we

could lapse into blissful unconsciousness of our most severe mental troubles oftener in this hard real life, as heroines in fiction do, even though it was severe illness; for it would be a blessed relief to this dull dreary drag, the ceaseless round, the bitter thrall of daily monotonous care and toil, to forget it all but for a little while, the torturing, corroding pain of heart and brain. But Allie closed the door sharply after her as she fled from the room where he had left her and—woke the baby. Little time for sentimental grief now, but a sort of dull apathy succeeded the nearly overwhelming misery as she pressed her babe closely to her aching heart. The cunning midget put up a plump little hand, stroked mother's cheek, cooing softly. As a waft of most loving sympathy it moved Allie's rebellious heart where such desperate feelings had wildly surged, and in an instant the tears flowed freely.

And then the days went on and on, woven into weeks and months, months of dreary grief to hopeless Allie.

Months of feverish constant watchfulness for Philip, who seemed to have as entirely disappeared from her life as if she never had known him, with the exception of a monthly installment which came regularly, more than sufficient for her simple wants. And here Allie's peculiar sensitive temperament soon began to assert itself in odd independence and a certain reluctance in using the money sent thus, till she soon came to the conclusion that she would not spend a cent of the money thus received upon herself, she would not be supported by the man she had so cruelly wronged. She sought employment and obtained enough sewing from a shop to supply all needful necessities for herself. Then this disturbing element that entered her life was of just the nature to quicken sensibility, rouse all the romantic sentimentality of her nature, and I have shown you enough of Allie's temperament already for you to know that she was slightly inclined to sentimentality, and a dormant power after a while manifested itself with surprising ability. Little Allie took to scribbling. Now I presume these lofty-minded people who have ever a watchful, thoughtful regard for the world's advancement, to each individual's highest good, would tell us this grief was just what Allie needed, was, in fact, as far as this developing theory advocates, the

best thing that could have happened in her life, which, beneath the serene care of a satisfied affection, would, in all probability, have flowed calmly on. The world would have been deprived of the cheering light of her genius, and she would have been only a contented happy wife and mother. A contented wife and mother—after all, isn't that the sweetest dearest good to a woman? The sacrifice of one peaceful happy life to the general good is but a small contribution, not worth a regret probably, yet we can but be sorry for little Allie, and grieve with those who grieve; we can but wish it could be different. Ah well! Poor little Allie needed the lesson, I presume; but there are many things in life so hard to bear that one must sometimes wish we might be born more perfect, so that we shouldn't need to be cudgelled all of the way to develop and bring us to a proper state of discipline; for it is so hard sometimes, dear Franc, to say "Thy will, not mine, be done," even though we know it is all for the best, and worketh to our good in the end. Before long Allie, who toiled hard and earnestly, received goodly compensation for her literary labors; so she was enabled not only to support herself but her children, and to think with extreme satisfaction as she carefully hoarded lost Philip's earnings, that it would be so nice for him to have even a little laid by against the time of need. Her life brightened, lost its utter hopelessness in activity, and this independence in means which answered a need of her nature, was as congenial companionship to her. Then there was something so true and frank, pathetic, yet such earnest common sense blended so quaintly in her writings, her life of seclusion giving her the advantage of piquant originality of thought and expression peculiarly charming, bringing to her flattering encouragement.

She was naturally of an elastic, exceedingly hopeful temperament, and it was impossible for her to be wholly depressed for a great length of time; to her, every cloud had its silver lining, and she soon got out of the darkness unto the lining—I am afraid my Allie was not of the sort, the high-tragedy order usually served up for heroines, for before reaching the frenzied state of sensational desperation, so attractive in these highly-seasoned times, her general hopefulness whispered softly that it was "not half so bad as it might be," and she

listened to the soft whisper and was comforted.

So she watched and hoped for Philip's return quite joyously at last, telling over and over to herself, day after day, just what she would say to him, how good she would be to him, how dearly she loved him, better than aught or anything else on earth, her noble true husband, whose truth shone out so glowingly in contrast to another's perfidy. No, Philip never would have done so, never would have planned so cruelly, deliberately, to wholly wreck the heart happiness of any one—what Hal Verner had called exacting selfishness in her husband was as exalted nobleness compared to his own heartless perfidy. She felt so sure of his love, too—that thought was as a steadfast rock of hope in the dreary desert of uncertainty to her; whatever he did, whatever happened to her, she knew Philip loved *her*, she was his choice before all others; he loved her even if she did not love him, and she felt now it was better for a woman to be loved than to love if but one could be given. And then she realized that she *did* love Philip with the purest affection of her heart.

Every strongly imaginative, sensitive person possesses more or less of an innate morbid life, a second nature, so to speak, cherished in all its tender vividness, and apt under certain circumstances, particularly in solitude, to run riot into most absurd extravagant fancies. Now the ideal of Allie's romantic heart was very glowing, exalted in delicate, tender, strong and noble imagery, and plain matter-of-fact Philip did not answer at all to this beautiful fanciful creation in their daily intercourse. But, as none of us are fully proven, or reach our true depth until sounded, forcibly stirred by the strong winds of adversity, or some great grief overwhelms us, forcing us to display our true innate colors; so all of those years of calm home life had not told her anything of this plain noble man's true nature, whose whole being had become centred in her, this one frail woman, as that one look of intense heart-crushing anguish that plain face had worn the last time she saw it revealed to her. Therefore handsome Hal Verner's seemingly refined poetic nature had at first appeared to be her exalted ideal personified, and the heartlessness of his scheming sensuality was so vividly thrust upon her as to shock her whole sensitive delicate nature. After all, it was

only her own beautiful creation, a fanciful ideal she had been infatuated with, not the man himself, and in reality Philip's true soul more fully responded to this, and Allie wondered at the change in her feelings, a change that was really no wonder at all. True, there were times when her sentimental heart would turn with something like regretful tenderness to that season of infatuation, the brief enjoyment of congenial sympathy, for he was a pleasing fascinating man, as all such strongly sensual persons are, even to delicate natures, while they wear the alluring mask of sentimentality; but this regret gradually wore away till she became wholly indifferent, and the most intense feeling she felt when she read his marriage to the insipid heiress would not have been very flattering to his vanity, for it was only pity for her who had wedded such a heartless man, one who must from his changeful nature and lax principles be more or less untrue to her.

The months of separation were woven into years; years of steady improvement and culture to little Allie, till one could hardly believe that this calm, dignified, gentle lady, so attractive in her ingenuous frankness to all, was little shy, impulsive Allie, who formerly would have "blushed with delight if you gave her a smile, and trembled with fear at your frown." Four years had passed since Philip left her; and one fair autumnal day when nature had garnered her golden sheaves, and given a most bountiful return of her varied goods to the diligent husbandman, closing the busy season with such an artistic display of variegated loveliness as no limner shall excel, or even hope to equal, enwrapped in the soft hazy mist of the glowing Indian summer, Allie's sadly quiet, dreamy life was disturbed by a telegram announcing the serious illness of her loved mother, who, shortly after her only daughter's marriage, had removed with her son to a Western city. Needful preparations were speedily made, and with her children Allie started, with a deeply anxious heart, on her long voyage. But when nearly there an unforeseen detention arrested her progress. A drenching rain, terminating in one of those devastating floods which have wrought such dire ruin at times in parts of the fair West, set in; bridges were swept away, the trains delayed, and one dark tempestuous

night Allie, with her children and many other passengers, was unavoidably delayed on her journey.

It was a large pretentious hotel to which Allie, with many other impatient travellers, repaired to pass the time until she could proceed. The weary little ones slept soundly after a refreshing supper, the sound sweet sleep of childhood, but Allie's anxious heart would not permit needful rest, and she lay wide awake, tossing restlessly, till some time past midnight, when suddenly every sense was roused by loud cries of "Fire!" close beside her. The gong was sounded loudly through the passages, mixed with screams of terror, loud calls, hurrying feet, and all the affrighted din usual to such an alarming time. Hastily preparing herself and children, whose terrified cries at being thus rudely aroused helped to increase the appalling din which nearly crazed her, Allie soon stood in the passage among the hurrying crowd essaying to escape from the impending danger. But just as they crowded around the landing a warning voice arrested their progress, as directly beneath them flames and suffocating smoke burst into the hall. There was a simultaneous rush for the other stairway, all attempt at order being frantically resisted in their headlong speed, a very pandemonium of groans, screams and cursing, mingling with the shrill cries of little children, as some are pushed down the stairs and trampled upon, all in selfish eager haste to escape.

At length, in what seemed a fearful length of time to the terrified inmates, but which really was but a few minutes, the burning building was apparently cleared; but in a moment the fearful intelligence was passed from one to another quickly, rising in a thrilling cry above the shouts of the firemen and the general uproar, that there was a sick man still in the fast-consuming building, the terrible information given by a woman who rushed frantically to and fro, entreating them to save her husband. A murmur of consternation followed, ending in the appalling confirmation that nothing could be done for him; the fire was bursting out on all sides, and no one could enter the flames to save him. A heavy hand was laid firmly on the frenzied woman's shoulder as a ringing voice demanded to know where, in what part of the hotel the sick man was, and strove to calm her by assuring her that he would save her

husband if possible, if she would only try to tell him; but as many essayed to give him the desired information, and all cried out that such a thing was impossible, there was a shout, cries of commiseration, as a ghastly face appeared at one of the windows, its wanness illuminated to a lurid glow, an unearthly aspect, by the flames leaping around and below it. The woman gave one shrill scream of hopeless anguish as in the hush that followed that apparition there was a piteous appeal for help audible, and then she fell prone upon her face, insensible, among the swaying crowd. But that daring one who had eagerly volunteered his assistance, his life, as it seemed, so recklessly, to save another's, passed firmly through the excited crowd, and soon a cry of consternation and remonstrance rose on all sides, as it became apparent that he was foolhardy enough to attempt to enter the fast-consuming building. But vainly they begged him to desist from his mad purpose; somehow amid the general confusion and remonstrance he eluded them, and in a moment it was evident to the terror-stricken multitude that a stream of water was brought steadily to bear at one point. The firemen watched with wondering stare and set blanched faces a rapidly-ascending figure, which for an instant, seeming an eternity of time, would be completely hidden from them, enveloped in fire and smoke, till at last it wholly disappeared from view within the circling flames; a moment of terrible suspense, then another apparition, a loud shout from it and hurried preparations by the mass below. Dire confusion reigned for a short space, as somehow the sick man, wholly enveloped in wet blankets, lay unconscious, cared for among them; and then—the walls had fallen in, and he, the hero, intent only upon saving the life of another, until it seemed too late to save his own, the cry arose that he had surely given his brave life for another. But at one side, whither he had leaped just as the swaying flaming walls fell, he was taken up a scorched, mangled, bleeding mass of scarcely recognizable humanity, more dead than alive, and borne away amid the acclamations and heartfelt commiserations of the surging crowd, side by side with Hal Verner, the sick man, who owed his life to him.

The next day, drawn by an irresistible impulse to look upon this wonderful hero

whose heroic daring every one was extolling, although usually nervously averse to all sights and scenes of horror and public places, timid Allie accompanied several ladies with the surgeon, several who had asked for one look at the daring man as a particular favor. Now having, through the shock of the whole terrible affair, and by necessity through the care of her little ones, kept her room the greater part of the time, she had not heard nor even asked the name of either of the men who had borne such a tragical part in that fearful time. Although deeply feeling for both, she thought them strangers; and at first, when one of the ladies, who had evinced a most friendly interest in the little lady and her children during the journey, showing the pretty little ones many kindly attentions, asked her to accompany them, to take a look at the hero, she had thought, with her usual aversion to publicity, to refuse; but an undefinable irresistible impulse had influenced her to go to look at this brave stranger.

One look at the disfigured face partly covered by bandages, and reticent Allie forgot all else as she passed by them, crying out thankfully:

"O Philip! *I have found my Philip!*"

There was a murmured answer in which the name of "Allie! my darling wife!" was distinguishable, and a tearful reiteration in return from Allie that nothing ever should part them again; and then—Philip had a most loving devoted nurse.

When he was partially recovered, and I looked upon the wan plain face, made still plainer by disfiguring scars, I saw above it a bright halo of radiant beauty, the crown of patience and true heroism; and I think Allie, happy Allie now, realized it as she murmured softly, reverently, her luminous eyes meeting mine after following my gaze to that noble face:

"Ah, Kate! God is *so good to me!*"

Ay, so he is, dear Franc, to all of his oft-straying rebellious children.

A LUCKY MISTAKE.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

It would be a dreary Christmas to me, as I felt. I watched the little children in the busy crowded streets, so eager, rosy-cheeked and happy, with a hungry regretful longing, and thought of my own joyous childhood, when I had been the cherished pet of a happy household, just as eager and joyous for the pleasures of the coming holidays. Now, even the memory of those happy times was painful, as I sat shivering in my dreary room that cold night. I pressed my hands over my aching eyes to shut out the dreariness around me, and mentally reviewed the past three years.

Ah! little did the happy children think, as they gathered around my desk that day and planned for the coming holidays, talking so gleefully of their anticipated pleasures, what keen misery each word was to my heart, although I strove to put what I deemed the uncharitable feeling away from me, and to fully sympathize in their happiness. It was just three years ago this very night that my gentle mother breathed her last in my arms, and I left my pleasant home, where I had been so happy, a lonely broken-hearted orphan.

I will not dwell upon the misery and depression of the first year after I left my home, the wearying fruitless search for employment, as day after day I saw my funds, the small amount I had been able to save from the sale of a few valuable articles, dwindling away for board, and night after night I laid an aching head and weary eyes, from which the oftentimes refreshing moisture of tears had long since departed, upon a lonely pillow, but will pass on to the time when, by the death of a highly-esteemed teacher in L—, a town adjoining my native place, I was fortunate in being allowed to supply the vacancy. At first, though very grateful for the opportunity to better my condition, the wearying routine of school duties was exceedingly annoying, for I was just at that stage in my grief when my whole heart and soul rebelled against the bitter change in my hitherto peaceful life, and consequently I was very irritable, and but a poor substitute for the patient loving teacher they had lost; yet, to

my surprise, I had been retained through two years, and the children had grown quite fond of me.

Scene after scene of those sad lonely years passed quickly through my mind. I lived again in memory all the tragical horrors of my poor father's suicidal death, my gentle trusting mother's quiet grief, my own rebellious stormy sorrow, and then a sharp sounding rap upon my very door startled me, in my moody fancies seeming a repetition of that other which had never left my disordered mind, the precursor of the announcement of my father's terrible death.

I started up in affright, trembling and quivering in every fibre of my person, so that I found it impossible to reach the door until the knock was repeated, in a still more peremptory manner. I hastened weakly to open the door, with the horror of that other night still upon me, and found only little Frank Smith, holding toward me a letter. He was my landlady's only son, a scholar who seemed really quite fond of his sad teacher. He was in the habit of bringing my letters to me, and appeared gratified in the performance of the kindly office. But now he started as he glanced at my pale startled face, and turned quickly from me as soon as I took the letter. I could not find my voice to express the usual thanks.

I held the unexpected letter in my trembling hand some minutes before I could open it. Glancing at the superscription, I saw it was in a bold manly hand. Curiously I opened it, and in surprise read these fond words:

"MY DEAREST ANNIE,—After a long search I have found you, my darling. O, the dreary dismal years of separation since we parted! But the time of probation has passed at last, and I am impatiently awaiting the necessary delay in the transaction of important business ere I can come, as fast as steam can bear me, to my darling. I write, that our meeting may not be delayed by your absence on my arrival in seeing you. I shall be with you by Thursday evening, and then—but we will leave the

sweetness to be said, dear. To think that my Annie should be confined to the wearying life of a school-teacher!

'Your loving, faithful

"RALPH."

Here was a surprise, indeed. The handwriting, the name, all was strange to me, and I, at twenty years of age, could safely say that I was heart-whole; and here was a genuine fond lover claiming me. Of course I had a deal of speculating with my cares until the next night, which was Thursday.

That evening I sat in my plain little room in a curious state of mind. I could not be expected to enjoy any of the rapture allowable on such occasions, and my feelings were wholly undefinable. I could not read. Mrs. Holmes's most interesting work lay open upon my lap, all unheeded. Just as the old clock struck eight I heard, with great trepidation, a firm manly step ascending the stairs, and in a moment I rose with great tremulousness to answer the hasty summons. The instant I opened the door and had a glimpse of a dark handsome face, a tall manly form, I was caught closely in strong arms and pressed fondly, while kiss after kiss fell upon my shrinking face. I struggled to free myself from this tender embrace, which was not mine by right, and releasing me, he closed the door, saying:

"Why, Annie, my darling, what is it?"

Then, in the glare of the light, he took a good look at me, started back, flushed with embarrassment, and said, in a confused way:

"Pardon me; I have been very rude to a stranger. I—I thought I had found my Annie. I do hope you will kindly forgive me for such great rudeness." And he leaned against the wall, as if hardly able to stand.

I made some confused reply, I hardly know what; but I really pitied him so, he must have seen it, and it relieved his embarrassment somewhat. I pushed a chair toward him, and as he sat down, he said:

"I do not know what to say for myself in extenuation of my extreme carelessness; but I was directed to this room, told that I should find my Annie—Annie Walton here. Can you tell me where she is?"

"My name is Annie Walton. I do not know any one else by that name," I answered, with embarrassment.

"Annie C. Walton?" he asked.

"Annie C. Walton," I repeated.

"It is singular your name is just the same, yet it is evident you are not the lady I expected to find here," he said, slowly.

"It certainly is, for I never have known you, or even seen you, to my knowledge, before," I replied.

"Did you receive a note from me, Miss Walton?" he asked, after a momentary hesitation.

For answer I gave the note to him. He thanked me, and rising, said:

"All that I will trouble you to say in explanation of my most inexcusable blunder is, that I left my home four years ago on account of most unpleasant circumstances. At that time I was betrothed to a lady bearing the same name that you do. For some reason her father, a very strict stern man, sought to break our engagement. Harsh words followed, and finally I left, comforted with assurances of lifelong devotion from Annie. For a year our correspondence was frequent and uninterrupted, and then longer and longer became the time in which I waited impatiently for replies to my letters, till at last they ceased altogether. I wrote urging an explanation of this neglect, but to this received no answer. Six months elapsed, and then, in a letter from a friend, I received casually the information that my friend was to marry, so report said, a very wealthy man—this with a joking remark following about what he had thought our relations were at the time of my departure, when he concluded he must have been mistaken. You can imagine my feelings. Business engagements from which I could not readily break away detained me sometime longer from seeking the positive assurance of the bitter fact. But at last I was at liberty to leave. Well, to be as brief as possible in this, to you, uninteresting story, I had been in New York but a few days when I met an acquaintance, and in course of conversation he mentioned that he was one of the school committee in the flourishing town where he resided. I do not know why I manifested any interest in that fact, unless for the appearance of a friendly concern, when I scarcely felt any interest in anything save my own trouble at that time; but I asked him about the schools, teachers, etc., and how great was my surprise when he told me that in the early part of his engagement he had the pleasure of supplying a vacancy with a teacher in whom he man-

hunted the most lively interest. I asked her name, and after a little anxious questioning which that elicited, I felt fully convinced that I had been misinformed, and that I had really found my Annie. You know the result—my foolish positiveness; yet at the time I wondered what reverses had led Annie to teach, and why she was so far from her friends. With this explanation, and craving your pardon again for my rudeness, I will leave to renew my search for Annie."

He extended his hand, which I took with queer emotions, and with a kindly good-by, and earnest wishes for my happiness and success, which I returned with a hope that he might be successful in his search, we parted.

Another year passed, during which nothing of importance occurred to vary the monotony of my dull life save that my feelings were grieved and disturbed by protestations of love and an offer of marriage from the man who had given Mr. Burton the information concerning me which had led to his queer mistake, which I could not accept.

And then one evening, cold and stormy, as I was returning from the office, I was greatly frightened by a broil between two large boys, both members of my school. One was much heavier and stronger than the other, and was beating him most unmercifully. I never could witness such scenes without being greatly disturbed and alarmed, and in my fright I begged of them to desist. Of course they paid no attention in their anger to my words, and, nearly unable to move, I stood trembling with fright beside them, when a man sprang past me and quickly separated them. Shaking the most belligerent one heartily, he bade him go home instantly. I recognized the voice quickly, before he turned to me, and lifting his hat, bowed lowly, and then, seeing how frightened I was, he offered his arm, saying:

"How frightened you are! Allow me to take you to your home."

One glance at his fine face told me that he was very unhappy. Nearly silently we hurried through the increasing storm, and when we reached my humble home I asked him to enter.

"With great pleasure, if it will not seem an intrusion to you, Miss Walton," he replied.

I assured him it would be a pleasure to me, but when seated, he dropped his head

upon his hand, and sat in moody silence for some time. I removed my damp wraps and stood near the fire, disliking, hardly knowing what to say, to break the unpleasant silence, when, looking up quickly, he said, in a strained unnatural tone:

"A pleasant companion I am, truly," and he laughed harshly.

I knew not what reply to make to this, and before I could recover from my surprise sufficiently to answer, he continued:

"You do not ask me what success I have had in that search for a loved one. Has my rueful face told you, my friend?"

"I am very sorry for you," I murmured, the tears weakly filling my eyes, in spite of a brave struggle to keep them back.

"Thank you," he replied, in so strange a way that I looked at him curiously, and my cheeks flushed hotly with indignation because I had expressed sympathy; and then he said:

"The heart craves sympathy; and if you were not a woman, I might believe yours sincere, as undoubtedly you do. Bah!" he continued, sneeringly, "they all cry over our sorrows, they all swear undying fealty, entire devotion to us, and then—ah! they will all turn and lavish their smiles and tears of tenderness upon another just as freely." And he rose and walked the floor hurriedly.

I was fiercely indignant. My hot temper rose to a white heat.

"Sir," I cried out, "you are insulting! I will not hear our sex abused by any man. Go talk that, if you feel it and must say it, to some faithful man. Are we less fickle than the generosity of your sex? I will be a trifle more generous than you have been in your ungallant sweeping assertion, and admit there are noble exceptions. You have lost your Annie, it seems, through her falsity; it grieved me to know it, for I thought you noble and loving. I regret my weakness. I do not doubt but that you will be speedily consoled, sir."

"Forgive—pardon my want of gallantry," he said, meekly, stopping abruptly before me. "I am suffering. I am bitter toward all the world. I have lost my Annie. I must tell you how I found her."

"I do not care to hear. I might manifest weakness again," I interrupted him.

"Do! I insist upon your listening to me just a moment. I found my devoted one, upon whose fealty I would have staked my

very life, the wife of another, a wealthier man, holding his child fondly in her arms!" He laughed that harsh unnatural laugh again, caught up his hat, bade me a hasty good-by, and was gone.

I drew near the fire, shivering as with cold, shudder after shudder shaking me as I recalled his looks, his manner, that laugh sounding continually in my ears, till I was nearly distracted; and rising, I walked the floor nervously until I became a little calmer, and retired. But sleep, so anxiously desired, would not visit my perturbed senses, and I lay tossing restlessly till the first faint streaks of dawn lighted feebly the gloom of my room before I lost my miserable consciousness in an uneasy slumber.

All through the next day, and indeed for three succeeding ones, I went about my duties as one in a painful dream, a sense of some impending evil at times nearly overpowering me. Then little Alta Smith, the hotel-keeper's interesting daughter, came to me one morning with a sad face, and said:

"O Miss Walton, there's a man dreadful sick at our house! He's so awful bad the doctor's afraid, and so is mamma, that he never'll get any better. Why, he just went on dreadfully all night last night calling and begging for some one to come. You see he don't know anything at all; and if you could have heard him it would have most scared you. It did me."

"But who does he call for, Alta?" I asked.

Alta dropped her head, her face flushing, and stood in silence some minutes; and wondering at her strange appearance, I repeated the question; looking up timidly, she said:

"I told ma I wanted to tell you, but she said 'twas no use to trouble you about it, as he didn't know what he said, and said such strange things about you! But I told mother I knew you'd come, you was so good, if you knew about it, and you could tell him different, and perhaps he'd be better then; for it's dreadful to have him so, when he was so handsome and pleasant. Ma said so, before he got sick about you." And little Alta looked pleadingly up in my face as she ceased speaking.

I kissed the wistful pretty face, and said: "So you think I might help him, Alta, and that he calls for me?"

"O yes, I know he does. And you will

come to see him, wont you?" she asked, eagerly.

"I will see about it, dear. Certainly, I should do all that I could for any one who is suffering. And now it is time to attend to the school," I answered.

"O, I knew you would," she whispered, smiling up in my face, as she turned to her seat in a most satisfied manner.

That evening I sat alone in my room, gloomy and restless, when my door was suddenly softly opened, and little Alta sprang eagerly to my side, and seizing my hand, she cried out:

"O come, wont you now, right off, Miss Walton! I came just as fast as I could. I made pa hurry so to keep up with me, that he's all out of breath. He's down stairs waiting. Come quick now."

"But you haven't told me where you want me to go yet, Alta," I said, tremulously.

The eager face clouded, drooped a little as she dropped my hand and said, falteringly:

"I—I told ma you'd surely come to see him, after I heard her tell the doctor she thought it might ease him some to see the one he called for so much; and the doctor said perhaps it might, 'twas best to try it. But he said something about there being some mistake, but I guess there aint; and you'll come, wont you, now?" she continued, pleadingly.

Assuring little Alta that I would go, I hastened to accompany her. In the hall Mr. Smith joined us, giving me keen curious glances, beneath which my cheeks burned hotly.

With strange mingled feelings of reluctance and anxiety I entered the sick stranger's room. Mrs. Smith rose stiffly, and came toward me with a cold distant mien, very unlike her usually cordial manner to me, and told me in a whisper that the poor gentleman was having a little sleep, and motioning me to be seated quietly, she gave me another scornful humiliating glance, and stiffly withdrew in righteous indignation. My heart bounded fiercely, my blood tingled hotly in my veins at her important offensive manner toward me, one who had never injured this man.

She had not noticed dear Alta, who had held closely to my hand when we entered the sick room, and now cuddled, clinging to me, her head resting upon my hand, beside

me. With my other hand I smoothed her soft glossy hair, striving to still the fierce tumult of my heart, the angry thoughts that agitated me; yet I felt justified in my indignant feelings. Mrs. Smith had known me well through the long time I had been a teacher among them, and striven to do my duty and lead a blameless quiet life; and I had believed her a cordial sincere friend to me. Now, how quick she was to cast contumely and insult upon me, to condemn me at once as being, I know not what, or how bad, only by the unreliable words of a delirious stranger! Truly, the charity of womankind toward one another surpasses all tender comprehension, and is enough to coagulate the sweet milk of human kindness to the delicious bitterness of gall.

She had known this man but for so short a time, knew nothing whatever of his past or present mode of life, yet her tender susceptible heart was, seemingly, filled to overflowing with motherly pity and anxiety. Nice, isn't it? Talk about the rights of women to be accorded the poor creatures by men! First let woman yield to her own sex one tithe of the pity, forbearance, charity in misfortunes and temptations, that is so freely lavished upon the stronger sex, and full one-half her suffering is ameliorated. Let a man sin, and many women at once cast the blame upon his suffering wife, and commiserate the "poor dear," because he cannot take any comfort at home, "he's got such an awful wife;" and thus he has become the dupe of another sinful creature who therefore merits the most bitter contempt of all her righteous sex. Bah! It's enough to make us wish—well, to sport a superb set of whiskers, and become a pet.

I had arrived to just this sweet state of feeling, when the door opened softly again, admitting the plump figure of the nurse, who was taking her supper when we came in. She nodded stiffly to me, and crossing the room as softly as one of her dimensions possibly could, she looked long and sadly upon the handsome manly face resting on the white pillows; then, with a sigh drawn from the very bottom of her big charitable heart, she turned her eyes upon me with a look intended to annihilate at once (happily I survived it), and then she spied little Alta, still holding to my hand.

"Go right out, dear, at once. This is no place for you. I know your mamma does not know you are here, with her;" empha-

sizing "her" most pleasantly. "Come, come out, at once!" And she grasped her by the hand.

But loving Alta resisted stoutly, as she whispered sharply, "I wont, now! I say I wont go out! I shall stay here with Miss Walton!"

I must confess I was too wicked to say, "You must go, dear," as I held her soft trusting hand closely, and gloried in her spirit, as the nurse sat down heavily.

The flushed face on the pillow moved restlessly, and a faint moan parted the parched lips. The nurse crept softly to the bed again, all attention to the slightest movement of the interesting gentleman. A moment, or more, maybe, he moaned, tossing his arms about, and she moistened his parched lips with a cooling liquid, and he murmured tenderly, "Annie! dear Annie! my Annie!" Then the feverishly bright eyes closed again, and he lay quiet, murmuring unintelligibly. The nurse turned from him with another sigh, sat down, giving me another scornful glance, and then said softly, commiseratingly:

"Poor fellow! he's an awful sick man, I tell you, miss!"

"Has the physician hopes of his recovery?" I asked.

"La sakes, how unfeeling! It does, I say now, seem jest cruel for him to suffer so on account of one—there, I might as well say it—of you, who don't appear to care nothing about him, nor have any heart at all about it, miss!" And she jerked herself in her chair impatiently.

"I should be very sorry to cause any one much suffering. And as for this gentleman, I never have caused him any suffering, for he is a stranger to me," I answered as calmly as I could.

"O mercy! I should think—well there, I don't know nothing at all what to make of the world, when young folks can be so deceitful! Here you be, jest as meek and saintly-looking as Moses; an' if I didn't know—". But I was spared the rest of the harangue, her further opinion of me, which would undoubtedly have been edifying, for, in her excitement at my heartlessness, she raised her voice, and disturbed the restless sleeper.

He called pitifully, "Annie! Annie! my Annie! I want my Annie!"

She said sharply, "Maybe, miss, you might be willing to try to ease him a little,

as we all thought it would to have you near him, if you don't care nothing about him, and wont even own that you know him as cares so much for you—more's the pity!" she muttered.

"Certainly, if I can relieve him, or any one else, in any way, I will be glad to. Perhaps I may possess some magnetic power, and can calm him a little," I said, as I rose and approached the bed.

Again he called for his Annie wistfully, tenderly, and taking his feverish hand in one of my cool ones, I passed my other slowly, soothingly over his hair, about his face caressingly.

"Annie! dear Annie!" he murmured, tenderly, pressing my hand affectionately against his cheek.

"There now! Jest to see, miss, how quick he knowed you, jest from the touch of your hand, him as don't know nothing else; and for you to deny it all, too! O, the deceit of this world! Only see how quick you've stilled him now, when we couldn't have done nothing with him but to hold him on to the bed when he gets so wild and goes on as he did last night!" she exclaimed, as he grew calmer, and the fluttering hurried respiration became more regular as I continued to pass my hand gently about his face.

I was ready to reply, when she continued, earnestly:

"I do say, miss, 'tis your bounden honest duty to stay here and take care of him to-night; and, for that matter, to make him as comfortable as you can all the time, to take care of him; though," she added, quickly, prompted by mercenary motives, "they do say I'm a capital nurse, and maybe you're inexperienced; and I'd jest as lief stay and help you any way in this duty, if I can't still him so."

"Quite probable," I replied, so amused at her flurried anxious manner that I could scarcely repress a smile. "It is only magnetic influence, I assure you; and it is no more my duty to take care of this gentleman than it is yours—nor so much, as you are, I presume, a much better nurse than I am."

"La now, to hear you talk of—of what do ye call it? This ere influence—as if anybody else except you who he is so dead in love with could take jest as good care of him; 'tis mean, I think. Now, why don't you jest own to it, if you be in love with

somebody else? Maybe it might make ye happier, for you don't look as if you was very happy, anyhow," she concluded, in a wheedling coaxing kind of a way, laying her large hand familiarly upon my shoulder, eager to gratify her curiosity.

"I have nothing to tell, I assure you, beside what I have already told: that this gentleman is a stranger to me, and what little of his affairs I may inadvertently know I shall not gossip about; whatever he wants you to know, let *him* tell you when he is well. You are greatly mistaken, all in the wrong," I said.

"Well, I never! I should think you was crazy," she exclaimed. "A stranger! As if anybody will believe that now. Why, didn't that Mr. Brown see him go into your house, and come away after he'd staid ever so long, miss? Stranger, I guess!"

"Well, have it so. Anyway to suit you," I answered, impatiently, more vexed than I had ever been before in my life. I really pitied this man, yet can you wonder that I felt a little bitter that he should thus disturb the equanimity of my life, somewhat calmer before his coming than its troubled waters had been for some years, and perhaps cast obloquy upon a name which had never felt the blight of a tarnish, a suspicion? I was wicked, selfish enough to feel it sensibly.

"O you needn't get mad about it," she sulkily replied, as she sat down some ways from me.

In a few moments, gently releasing my hand from his clinging clasp without awakening him, I went to her and told her I was willing to do what I could through the night to assist, as I was there, heartily wishing to myself that I was not.

"Well, that's good of you," she eagerly replied, her face relaxing from its grim sulkiness, "and as I'm most tired out, I'll jest lay down on this lounge and try to catch a nap. If you need me you can call me, you know," and after a few hasty directions she laid down, and was soon snoring loudly.

Soon Mrs. Smith came in and took Alta away to bed, and I was left alone, as it were, with my charge. He had a more quiet night than I expected, but the looks I got on my way to school the next morning contained anything but a blessing.

In short, matters grew so extremely unpleasant in a few days; prudent mammae kept their children away from my contam-

inating presence, at home, cold looks met me every way, and an absurd story reached me through one trusty friend. In substance, the nurse had told, that the poor gentleman had come to his senses enough to know me, *my wife*, and had plead with me in a most affecting manner, not to desert him again, to leave the miserable creature for whom I had left him, but I would give him no consolation whatever, in that respect, although he became as quiet as a lamb "jest at the touch of my hand. But there," she ended, she supposed it was kind of hard on me, if I was a sinful creature, to give up that child, and of course he couldn't be expected to want *that* round!"

Finally it was a little too much for me, and weakly, it may be, I gave up the situation, just as I had become attached to the school, was contented and happier than I had been since my happy home was broken up. The committee demurred at my resignation, but finding me determined, they consented to release me at the end of a week, after securing another teacher.

Two years passed drearily, monotonously, in a situation much less lucrative, and more disagreeable, and then again my life was disturbed by the appearance of the one who had innocently caused me so much suffering. Again he sought me.

After recovering from his severe illness, he had learned the serious injury he had unwittingly caused me, and he sought vainly for me some time; then the severe illness of his father, lasting several months and resulting in his death, detained him at home.

My feelings had been very bitter towards him whenever the unpleasantness of my present position oppressed me, and when I was told that a gentleman awaited me in the parlor on my return from school one day, a gloomy, drizzling day, a continual misty drip for two days upon the soft snow, a leaden-hued sky and slosh under foot, made it disagreeable enough to give me a wearied discontented heartache—not a pleasing mood in which to greet the one who rose as I wearily entered, vaguely wondering who could want to see me, feeling too apathetic to have much lively curiosity about it.

We stopped suddenly, the eager pleased expression quickly fading from his face as I bowed coldly, and stood still looking at him.

His fine eyes drooped a moment, then raising his head he said in a troubled tone:

"You cannot forgive me, Miss Walton?" A moment, it may be, I stood confused, then the old bitterness returning with full force, I said:

"I cannot be expected to feel very kindly towards you, or be very glad to see you, sir. I am naturally a very frank woman, and if I speak, I must say just what I feel."

"I ought to have known better than to have come here, I know, but I did want to see you, and—and I hoped I might be able to conciliate you a little when you knew how sorry I am that I have been the cause of so much trouble to you, when you were so kind to me, manifested so much sympathy for me in my disappointment—"

"Please forget it, sir," I interrupted hastily, angrily.

"Forget it!" he said, reproachfully. "Do you really wish me to forget that you have been kind to me? Do you regret it so much? Well, I cannot forget it, however much you may desire it, nor what little Alta told me of all your kindness while I was delirious. I cannot, I will not try to forget it. Ah! Miss Walton, I did not think you would, *could* be quite so harsh. I see there is nothing left but for me to again express my gratitude, and rid you of my disagreeable presence. I hoped we might be friends, and I wished heartily to make all possible reparation for the mischief I had done," he concluded, with sad regretfulness, looking wistfully at me as he turned to leave.

My heart *did* relent, but I was too proud, too stubborn to show it. I did really feel a strange interest in this noble-appearing stranger.

I thought he had gone, when he quickly returned and said:

"At least grant me pardon for this bold intrusion, as I find it appears to you, and allow me to tell you that they are all sorry for the wrong they did you, their evil suspicions—"

"Undoubtedly," I said bitterly, my lip curling with contempt, at the remembrance of their hasty uncharitable suspicions.

"And they would gladly welcome you back," he continued, sadly, unmindful of the interruption.

"Probably they will, when I go," I answered, scornfully.

He looked at me steadily, sadly, a moment, and then he said, "Good-by, Miss Walton," extending his hand.

"Good-by," I coldly responded, unmind-

ful of his hand, really not daring to touch it, for I pitied this man, while I felt somewhat provoked with him, for what, to my untrammelled heart, seemed weakness and pity, they say, is akin to love.

At last he was gone, and I sat down weak and tremulous. I was very nervous, and this interview, the struggle to control my excited feelings, had been almost too much for me. For three days I suffered from a terrible headache, and then I was wholly prostrated with a nervous fever. I was confined to my room for two weeks. Then I rallied and went about my duties wearily, sadly, a curious strange sense of loss filling my heart and at times nearly overpowering me. Soon I began to torture myself continually with worrisome misgivings, fearing I had been too harsh to one who had never intended to injure me. I struggled fiercely with this feeling, which, in my bitterness, I deemed weakness, but it would persistently harass me. I kept on wearily in this troubled state till the close of the term, and then, quickly packing a few needful articles, I started one morning for a short visit to my aunt, my mother's only sister, who resided about eighty miles from the place where I was teaching, hoping by change of scene and society to exorcise the evil spirit which tormented me. Half the distance was travelled, and—where was I? I sat gazing dreamily out upon the changeful scenery as we were whirled quickly along, unmindful of all that passed around me, when a shrill whistle roused me, and the next moment blank unconsciousness, preceded by an instant of confused danger, veiled all.

The sun crept shyly through the drawn curtains, and cast a glorified sheen over the madonna-like face of a portrait, a lovely lady, upon which my eyes rested with surprised pleasure, when I opened them with the same feeling with which one awakens in the morning, and then a sense of extreme weakness nearly overcame me. I lay half fainting a few moments, my dim gaze still resting upon the sweet face; then, as I gradually became stronger, the stupefying giddy weakness left me. I looked about me in confused surprise. No, I never had been in this room before, surely. What *did* it mean? There was a strange feeling about my head. I put my hand up weakly, and found it was bandaged. As soon as I raised my hand a

soft stealthy step approached me, and in a moment a mild rather aged face was bending above me, a pair of kind eyes looked intently at me, and then a musical voice said:

"Do you feel better, my dear?"

It was so much like the voice, the tender solicitude of my loved lamented mother, that the tear instantly filled my eyes, and that giddy feeling wholly overcame me—sight and sense left me entirely.

The next I was conscious of was a voice quite familiar to me saying, tremulously:

"O, I am afraid she is dead, aunt!"

"No, no Ralph! Do you not see she is reviving! You must go out instantly; she is too weak to see you now."

Some person hurriedly left the room, and I lay quiet with eyes half closed, holding feebly the hand which had taken mine, not daring to move, fearing the return of that overpowering weakness, till I fell asleep.

Several days of weakness passed in which I was tenderly, carefully nursed by the gentle lady, gaining a little strength in each, till with strength surprise became such an intense curiosity that I insisted upon being told what had happened and where I was. And my tender nurse said:

"I will tell you a little to quiet you, this much, my dear. You were travelling, there was a collision, you were injured and many others. You are now rapidly recovering, among friends who were happily near the scene of the disaster—"

"But I do not know you," I said in a childish way, pressing the hand I held.

She smiled, and replied:

"I suppose not, child; but I am deeply interested in you, anxious for you to recover, and so I must insist upon your being very quiet now; drink a little of this and try to sleep, feeling that I shall care for you as if you were my own child."

I obeyed, feeling that I would do anything for this sweet lady, and soon fell asleep again.

One day, nearly two weeks after she had thus partially satisfied my curiosity, being now quite strong and able to walk about a little, as she was sitting beside me and we were conversing freely about the dreadful accident, I again earnestly, tearfully expressed my gratitude for all her tender kindness, and laying her sewing down, she took my hand in hers and said, softly, looking earnestly at me:

"I hope I should have done my duty by

any sufferer, dear Annie, but I am going to confess to you now that I have been a little selfish, perhaps, in the solicitous care I have taken of you, for the more than usual interest I have felt on account of another; the one who brought you here to me is very dear to me. He was on board the train, coming to me, in the rear car, and fortunately was uninjured. He saw you when you changed at N—and got into the fated train, and his first thought was of you. You have often told me, Annie, during these weeks, that you would do anything for me, and now I am going to be exacting and selfish enough to ask a favor of you. Will you grant it, my dear?"

With a swift startling suspicion of the truth, I murmured a reply to the effect that I could deny her nothing, and then, overwhelmed with conflicting emotions, I began to cry. She soothed me as she would a fractious child, and then, at my earnest entreaty, told me that the favor she desired of me was that I would be kind to and forgive Ralph Burton, for he was her orphaned nephew, her dearly beloved, adopted child. He had told her all—the unintentional injury he had done me, my unforgiving coldness to-

ward him which had grieved him so. He was coming home to-morrow, having been away on business a few days, and now hoped to see me.

I promised kindness and forgiveness. He came. And now to shorten a much longer story than I intended to tell, I will speedily announce what I presume you are all prepared to hear—for who can tell an entirely original love story, give a wholly unexpected denouement, when Love's pranks are so common, familiar to all? When he so often resorts to such queer vagaries to heal wounded hearts? We soon became friends, lovers, to the great satisfaction of our dear aunt, and mother—and to-day Ralph says he would not for worlds exchange his willful Annie for the one he first loved, despite the sentimental witchery of Love's first sweet dream, and I am credulous, foolish enough to believe him, he is so tender, so noble, and I love him so well.

My tender nurse, our loved honored mother, says she is very happy and contented with us in our beautiful cosy home, and is daily thankful that my name, also, was Annie C. Walton, and the cause of a lucky mistake.

A NIGHT AT THE CASINO.

BY JAMES FRANKLIN FITTS.

My story, gentlemen? Such as it is you are welcome to it. I cannot give you any such mysterious narrative as our friend has just finished—nor a love story, as the gentleman who preceded him—nor a ghost story, as did our young friend opposite me. There is neither love, mystery nor marvel about me, as I should frankly declare before I begin. I was never in love in my life, and never expect to be; I have the most positive disbelief in everything supernatural, and never encountered anything, during my somewhat extended experience of life and travel, that cannot be accounted for upon known and reasonable suppositions. My tale shall be a true one; an account of a remarkable adventure which befell me in Northern Italy, some thirty years ago. I was young, then, a mere boy, in fact, with a pocket-full of money, travelling to see the world, and as little versed in its rascalities as most people are under such circumstances. But a few such happenings as this one went very far towards improving my understanding and brightening my wits.

During the pleasant Italian April I had wandered away from Rome and its curiosities, intent upon seeing something of the rural life of the country, and with this object had reached the belt of land lying between the Maritime Alps and the Gulf of Genoa. Italy as it is at the present day I

know nothing about; but if it is worse than it was thirty years ago, morally, politically or socially, then Heaven be merciful to it! The face of the country was attractive to me; but the villages were ruinous and sleepy; the government worse than none at all, as its chief object seemed to be to give subsistence to a horde of lazy officials, without affording protection to anybody; the beggars merry and clamorous, and the people seemed generally impressed with the idea that travellers were a legitimate prey. All this was repugnant to my American education and habits, and it only needed the stimulus of such an adventure as you will hear about presently, to determine me to prosecute my travels in some more congenial quarter of Europe.

The beginning of my trouble upon this occasion, and what led directly to the after-consequences, was a break-down on the road. I was travelling in one of the clumsy conveyances of the country, the outlandish name of which has escaped me, and expected to reach one of the coast towns before night. The slow methodical movement of the vehicle, and the sultriness of the afternoon, had sent me off into a doze, from which I was aroused by the abrupt stopping of the horses, and soon after the driver opened the door, and thrust his grinning face in upon us. An Italian always

grimaces when he has bad news to announce, and his appearance prepared me for what followed.

"What is the matter?" asked my companion, a gruff middle-aged Englishman.

"Nothing, excellency, except that one horse is sick, and the other will not move, and the linchpin of one of the wheels has lost itself, and—"

"There, stop, you olive-colored imp! Do you call that nothing? How are we to get to Carrara?"

"Excellency, I don't know."

"What are we to do?"

"If the signors would not mind sleeping in the carriage to-night—"

"I would not mind blacking your eyes, you scoundrel, for getting us into this scrape!" Mr. Bradshaw roared.

"If your excellency pleases," responded the imperturbable driver. "But that will not help the matter."

The Englishman's stormy expression changed to a vexed smile, while I laughed outright at the quizzical humor of the fellow.

"But if the signors prefer," he added, "they might walk on to St. Marie, which is only five miles from us. There is a kind of public house there, I believe, the Casino, where they can pass the night, and about midday to-morrow I can take them on."

The prospect was not an encouraging one, and we conferred over the subject several moments before deciding to follow his advice. Five miles, especially Italian measurement, on an April day, over a dusty road, was not a pleasant inducement to a traveller; but it seemed a less evil than dragging out twenty-four hours in this desolate spot, and with the cramped quarters of the vehicle for a bed-chamber. There was no resource, and we reluctantly came to the conclusion that we must seek better accommodations, and postpone our further progress till the following day. The driver had laid himself flat on his back, and turned up his face to the sun, with an expression of thorough enjoyment which irritated Mr. Bradshaw beyond endurance. He broke out in a torrent of epithets upon the country, the inhabitants, and our Jehu especially, and it required some diplomacy upon my part to keep the toes of his heavy boots away from the fellow's ribs. I was the more anxious to keep the peace between them, as I suspected that the length of our

detention in this vicinity depended more upon the caprice of the driver than upon the condition of his vehicle and horses; and I finally succeeded in persuading the Englishman to take the road with me. His baggage consisted of a light satchel, which he could easily carry; mine was somewhat heavier, but Christophe, my servant, was strong and willing, and he clambered down from the box, and followed us, carrying it over his shoulder by a stick.

After the first feeling of vexation had passed I began to find our situation novel and amusing, and to anticipate some adventure from it. Not so with Mr. Bradshaw. He was a perfect specimen of the traditional Englishman; obstinate, opinionated, with a thorough dislike for everything foreign; but with a substratum of real good feeling under his roughness, to those who could reach it. But the afternoon's accident had given him unusual vexation, and most of the way to St. Marie he walked on the opposite side of the road from me, spitefully clipping off the mullens with his stick. For lack of his company, I called up Christophe, and interrogated him about St. Marie and its Casino; but he knew nothing about this part of the country, having passed most of his life in Rome, where he entered my service. Christophe was a handsome lad of perhaps nineteen, and had recommended himself to me by his fidelity. After a month's trial I became satisfied that he was an Italian who would neither lie, steal nor cheat, and was willing to black boots—in short, almost a modern Trans-Alpine miracle. My confidence in this instance was not misplaced; but it would be unsafe for every person to derive from it any general notions of Italian honesty.

We plodded on in silent weariness, and the five miles lengthened into about nine, before we reached the miserable jumble of buildings dignified with the name of St. Marie. It was almost dark, and there was nobody in the street of whom we could make inquiries, and a snarling cur on every doorstep deterred us from applying within for information.

"I think," said Christophe, "if there is anything in appearances, yonder must be the Casino."

He pointed to a shambling structure opposite, half of which had the look of a mediæval villa, and the balance of a market-house. We walked entirely around it once

before discovering the entrance, which was a narrow door, opening on the ground. Christophe knocked, and was answered quickly by the twinkling of a light, and a man's voice.

"Who's there? and what's wanted?"

"We are three belated travellers," I replied, "looking for an inn. Is this the Casino?"

"Yes. Are you Englishmen?"

"One Englishman, one American, and my servant, an Italian. Can you keep us?"

"You have money?"

Mr. Bradshaw's wrath rose to fever heat again at this juncture, and I verily believe that he was preparing to kick the door down, when it was opened to us. After we had entered, it was closed and bolted behind us, leaving us in a dark hall. A door at its other extremity was thrown open, and we followed our interrogator into a large bare room, scantily furnished, and unattractive. There were present in it four persons: a stout thick-set man of middle age, two younger men with a strong resemblance to him, and a girl of seventeen, or thereabouts. The men were all brawny muscular fellows, with dark faces, and a uniform cast of countenance—cunning and quick. They were apparently father and sons, and impressed me most unpleasantly at first sight. The girl was of a very different type. She was graceful as a fawn, with one of those beautiful olive-oval faces that Guido loved to paint, and the black hair and eyes of all Italian women. Almost the first thing that attracted my attention was a glance of recognition between her and Christophe, which surprised me, after his declaration that he was not acquainted here; but the incident did not trouble me. I motioned him to lay my satchel on the table, which he did. A metallic sound from within, as it touched the wood, drew the attention of one of the men to it.

"Ah!" he said, lifting it in his hand, and weighing it, "the signor carries valuables."

It was a very imprudent way to keep money, and I should have known better. The satchel contained quite an amount in coin, besides other valuables, the money being the proceeds of a bill of exchange on Leghorn that had been cashed for me. The man's eye glittered covetously, and he slapped the bottom of the satchel twice with his hand before he laid it down. Mr. Bradshaw had thrown a keen glance around

the room, and over its inmates, upon entering, and then threw himself into the only armchair. I took the end of a bench, and Christophe took a mat in the corner.

"Will the signors eat?" our host inquired.

The Englishman answered with a surly negative. Although not hungry, I was excessively tired, and said that I should much like some coffee.

"To be sure," said the black-bearded Boniface.

"Nina, make it, girl, as quick as you can."

"And as strong," I added.

"Yes, very strong," he repeated, with a grimace, the exact meaning of which I did not comprehend till some hours after.

Some twenty minutes passed before Nina reappeared with the coffee. Wearied as I was, it is possible that there were many glances thrown from one to the other which I did not see, and some indications of the character of the place which escaped me; but I did see enough to make me uneasy. I knew that this was one of the wildest and most lawless quarters of Italy, very near the mountains, where banditti often prowled, and this place did not wear the appearance of a public house. The three proprietors of it, such as they were, sat in stolid silence, darting quick glances at us whenever we moved. By accident or design, one of them sat between me and Mr. Bradshaw, and another between me and Christophe, so that I could only see the face of my companion by leaning forward. Christophe was in the shadow of a great wardrobe, so that I could not see his face at all; and Bradshaw's, whenever it was visible, wore a look which I could not interpret at all. The expressions of his face had not grown familiar to me yet, and I was puzzled to conjecture what was passing in his mind. The room was rapidly growing dark; and, altogether, I felt uneasy.

Presently Nina came in with a tray, on which were three cups of coffee. She presented it first to Mr. Bradshaw, but he refused to take any. Not so with Christophe and myself. I found it excellent, very strong, as I liked it, and drank it with great satisfaction. A single tallow candle had been lighted and placed on the table, but beyond its narrow radius the room was as dark as before. Bradshaw took a key from his pocket, opened his valise, and

produced a stout bottle with the Otard label, and a small tin cup. I noticed a look of satisfaction pass from the Boniface to one of his sons, and he rested his elbows on the table, and regarded the Englishman with a look such as a hyena might wear in trying to smile.

"Excellency loves brandy," he murmured, in a purring voice. "So, so; he is right. They say it is better than coffee. I don't know, for I don't drink it."

Between the sips from my cup I regarded my companion attentively, and was astonished beyond measure at his actions. From this time he paid no more attention to any person in the room than if he had been alone in it, but devoted his attention exclusively to the bottle and its contents, with the deliberate intention, I thought, as he proceeded, of making himself intoxicated. He uncorked the bottle, and poured out a cupful of the bright red liquid, swallowing it off at a draught. Smacking his lips, he repeated the dose, while the men of the house, as well as myself, looked on with wonder, to see clear brandy consumed in this way. He drank the third cupful soon after, and the fourth not ten minutes later. His hand became so unsteady that he could not replace the cork in the bottle, and in attempting to do so, broke the bottle against the arm of his chair, and spilled the balance of the liquor upon his legs. After some unsuccessful efforts, he succeeded in turning the key in the satchel, and withdrawing it; but it fell from his hand on the table. I reached across and took it, placing it in my pocket. Bradshaw seemed to comprehend the intention, for he turned up his eyes with a gleam of intelligence; but the hopelessly drunken expression which he wore showed that it would be useless now to try to communicate my suspicions to him, even if I had a chance. I was shocked and disappointed, and more than ever troubled with this turn of affairs. As he sat in his chair the fumes of his brandy rose to his brain, and completed his stupidity. He leaned his arms heavily upon the table, and his head fell forward upon them. Occasionally he would raise it, and look around with a bewildered air, and then a hiccough would remind him of his condition, and it would fall again. This continued half an hour, while I sat watching him, and the others watched us both; and then Bradshaw raised himself with

difficulty to his feet, by grasping the edge of the table, seized his satchel, and in a thick voice demanded to be shown to bed.

"Give us two a chamber together," I interposed.

"We cannot, excellency," he of the black beard replied. "We keep but a humble house; there is not a double bed in it."

I was about to remonstrate; but Bradshaw had already taken the broad shoulder of the speaker for a support, and was staggering crookedly across the floor. They went up a stairway, the Englishman carrying his satchel in one hand, with a kind of drunken instinct that was remarkable, and the last that was heard from him was his maudlin voice imploring his conductor to keep the stairs still, while he ascended them.

Perhaps I did not betray my feelings; but I was both excited and alarmed. From my first idea of anything wrong in the house or its inmates, I had assured myself that Bradshaw would not be at fault—Bradshaw, one of the oldest commercial travellers that ever crossed the Alps—and that his sound judgment and keen wits would get us safely through any difficulty. Now I was thrown upon my own resources, and must provide, single-handed, against any danger that might threaten. Under the circumstances, I took the best possible course; I resolved to get a room by myself, where I could think over the matter alone. So I took my valise from the table, and asked to be shown to my chamber.

"I will carry it, excellency," one of the men said, moving his hand toward the satchel.

"No, you wont," I answered, sturdily. "Get a light, and show me the way."

The fellow was somewhat disconcerted by my manner.

"Unfortunately, excellency, we have no other candle than that which my father took to light his English excellency to bed. But we keep a humble house."

I followed him up the stairs. At the top we met the Boniface, just closing the first door, through which, I inferred, he had conducted Bradshaw; and my guide opened the next one for me. We were to be neighbors, at all events. I entered, and was about to lock the door, when the thought of Christophe occurred to me. It was an evidence of my excitement that I had come to my chamber without him. It was my in-

variable custom to have him spread his blankets on the floor by my bed; and to-night, of all nights I had passed in the country, it seemed desirable. Stepping to the head of the stairs, I called his name aloud. There was a movement of several pairs of feet across the floor of the room, a moment of hesitation, while I hung over the banister, and then a door was slightly opened at the foot of the stairs, and the black face of our host thrust toward me.

"Send up Christophe my servant to me, immediately," I said. "He always sleeps in the room with me."

I entered the chamber again and surveyed it. It was a narrow apartment, low-ceiled, and not very attractive. There was no table in it, and no chairs; no furniture of any kind, save the bed in the corner, which, notwithstanding the assurance of the host to the contrary, was a double bed! Not much reassured by this discovery, I removed my coat and boots, placed my satchel beneath the pillow, and laid myself down. Before my thoughts became at all composed, there came a creaking of boots on the stairs, and Christophe entered the room, with his blankets over his shoulder. I told him to lock the door, which he did, and then spread down his blankets near the foot of the bed, and stretched himself out.

"Christophe," I said, as quietly as possible, "don't this seem like a very queer place?"

There was no answer. I raised myself to my elbow, and called his name in a louder key—"Christophe!"

He made no reply, except by a long-drawn snore. There he lay on his side, his back turned toward me, already sound asleep!

The discovery angered me; with Bradshaw too drunk and Christophe too sleepy to be of any dependence, it seemed that nobody but myself appreciated the danger.

What danger? I threw myself back on the pillow, closed my eyes, and deliberately considered that question. After all, had I not been unreasonably alarming myself? Was there anything in the conduct of those men below stairs more unusual than could be seen in any Italian inn where the people had the national characteristic of curiosity, and were dark-skinned and sharp-eyed? If there had been anything really alarming, would not Mr. Bradshaw be the first to see it—and would he, in that case, have indulged his unfortunate appetite as he had? And

Christophe, honest fellow as he was, knew all about the Italian character, and must certainly have detected anything wrong; yet here he was in his usual place, sleeping like a top. Pish! I was troubling myself with shadows.

Seriously arriving at this conclusion, I determined to go to sleep, and think no more of it. It was easy enough to make this determination, but hard enough to accomplish it. My long walk had prepared me for it physically, and I really needed rest; but the excitement of the night, combined, perhaps, with the coffee I had taken, was a powerful counteractive, and

"Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care"

could not be coaxed to visit my eyelids. Various specifics for somnolence that had at different times been suggested to me, were successfully tried. I counted my pulse till it reached two hundred and twenty; I took my thoughts back to the beginning of the day, and traced down to the present moment every act of my own; I threw all manner of thought away from me, and tried to keep my head empty of every idea; I let my eyes wander around the room in a circle of gradually increasing circumference—all to no purpose. With a mental vow to eschew coffee thereafter before going to bed, I relinquished my efforts.

Up to this time, there had been barely light enough to reveal the outlines of objects; but the moon breaking through the clouds, poured a flood of light in at the uncurtained window, making everything visible in the apartment. This window, the only one, was directly opposite the bed; five feet beyond it, Christophe lay on the floor, his body forming a right angle with the bare board; on the wall toward which his face was turned, a small looking-glass was suspended, at a right angle of thirty-five degrees. As the moonlight burst in the window, I looked again around the room. There was nothing in it to hold my attention long, and I turned my eyes to Christophe. The blankets were drawn all about him, leaving only his head uncovered. For the first time, I noticed that his face was reflected in the glass beyond him; only his face, as the glass was small. I saw the reflection, comprehended its startling meaning, and closed my eyes, faint and sick with fear. I use the word deliberately; the situa-

tion was one to make the stoutest heart quail with silent terror!

My eyes unclosed a very little, just enough to pass a mere thread of light between the lids. There was no mistake; there was no chance for mistake. That telltale glass reflected the villanous face of the man who had shown me the way to this chamber, and entered it, as it seemed, under the cloak of Christophe's character. His hands were both placed under his head, one of them grasping a knife half the length of his arm; his teeth were set hard together, and his eyes seemed to burn with anticipation. He was eagerly watching the reflex of my own face, but quietly, silently, without word or motion.

I gave one moment to shrinking unmanly despair, as the full horror of my situation broke upon me; and then my strength returned to me, and with a mental invocation to the Almighty for aid, I took rapid thought. My pistols were in my valise under my head. O, that they were in my hand! Could I venture the motions of taking my keys from my pocket, opening the valise, and taking them out? Vain hope! The keen eyes of the miscreant watched me from the mirror, like those of a tiger intent on his prey. As I looked, the man rose cautiously to his elbow, and turned his face toward me; my stillness for several minutes had no doubt led him to believe me asleep. I lay quietly beneath his scrutiny, every nerve and muscle strained to a painful tension. A thought darted through my brain, born of the desperation of the moment, and I snatched it, as a drowning man will grasp at straws. The ruffian appeared satisfied that his propitious moment had arrived, and rose to his feet. He passed his thumb over the point of his knife, with a motion that chilled my blood within me, and then carefully removing his shoes, took two steps toward the bed.

Only two. I had worked my hands up quietly under my head, and grasped the lower edges of the pillow-case. Two steps brought him within striking distance. I bounded to my feet with a yell like the war-whoop of a Sioux, and aimed a furious blow at his head with the pillow. The shock, and the backward step he had taken in his first astonishment, took him to the wall. I had hoped that he might drop the knife in his movement, and that I could possess myself of it; but he did not. Nor was he long

disconcerted. With an oath like the growl of a furious wild beast, he sprang toward me, and thrust the knife at my breast. But I was ready. The weapon was buried in the pillow, and both fell to the floor. We were upon equal footing now. He glared at me savagely, and rushed at my throat. Grappling with each other, we wrestled furiously at arms' length. We were of about the same age, and nearly the same strength, and neither of us gained any perceptible advantage. I was putting forth every effort of my strength to bring him down, when my foot tripped in the blankets on the floor, and I fell heavily. Before I could make an effort to rise, his knee was on my chest, and his hand was stretched out for the knife. I seized his wrist, and with some indefinable impulse shouted aloud the name of Bradshaw.

"Coming!" responded his well-known voice from the hall. The doorlatch was tried from the outside, and then a foot was placed against the door, and it flew from its hinges, and revealed the Englishman standing in the doorway, perfectly cool, without a trace of intoxication in his appearance, with a candle in his left hand, and a pistol in his right. Before my assailant could grasp the knife, Mr. Bradshaw extended his arm and fired. The ruffian uttered a shriek of rage and pain, and springing against him, forced his way past, and rushed down the stairs.

I rose to my feet, panting with exertion. My first care was to secure my pistols, and then I turned to Bradshaw.

"My dear friend, you have preserved me," I said, seizing both his hands.

"Have I?" he returned, dryly. "Well, I have done no worse by myself, as you will see by stepping into the next room, and looking at the blood on the floor. And you thought me drunk—ha, ha! Not badly done, eh?"

After the unexpected event of our danger—for we began to consider it as past now—we entered into mutual explanations. Bradshaw listened with interest to my account of the manner in which the miscreant had obtained access to my room, and then gave me his own account of the evening's work, which was quite as surprising. It was so plentifully interspersed with anathemas upon the country and its inhabitants, that I prefer to give it in my own words.

It seemed that his suspicions were aroused

quite as soon as mine, and that he had tried to communicate with me, but was prevented by the shrewdness of the wretches into whose clutches we had entered. He suspected also that the coffee might be drugged; and to blind them to the object of his refusal to drink it, he feigned intoxication, the liquid in the bottle being a harmless cough mixture. After he reached his chamber, he purposely omitted to fasten the door; and securing his pistols, he crouched down behind the footboard of the bed, and awaited further developments. Before my struggle with my assailant had begun, one of the men entered his room, armed likewise with a knife. Bradshaw made no parley with him, but shot him directly, the ball entering his shoulder, he thought. The discomfited villain fled; and at that moment the Englishman first heard the noise of my struggle, and gave me his timely aid. The noise we made prevented his pistol-shot from being heard, and the first intimation that he was aroused, was his voice in the hall.

"You fought a good battle, my lad," he said. "You were taken at a great disadvantage, but you did well. Let us now go down stairs and reconnoitre."

"It grieves me beyond measure," I said, "to know that Christophe, whom I would have trusted with my life itself, must be connected with this nefarious work. I would as quickly have suspected my brother."

Mr. Bradshaw curled his lip scornfully, at the idea of any incentive being stronger to an Italian than love of money; and I followed him down stairs. There was no Christophe, no Nina, nobody at all; the whole party had fled, leaving us undisputed masters of the Casino. The floors and the stairs were spotted with blood, which we traced out into the fields back of the house. Our scoundrelly entertainers had met with a severe punishment, and had taken safety in flight.

We passed the night as best we could, keeping alternate watch; but nothing further occurred of a disturbing nature. When morning came, we went to the sleepy magistrate who played the part of Justice Shallow at St. Marie, and told him our story. He regarded us with suspicion, distrusted our story, and told us that if we made a complaint, we must both be committed to confinement to await investigation. Brad-

shaw addressed him one of the most emphatic English oaths I ever heard, and strode into the street. We had naturally some suspicions of the driver who directed us to the Casino; but he drove up his vehicle about noon, looking as innocent and harmless as an Italian cannot look with honesty, and listened with open-mouthed wonder to our tale. Bradshaw taxed him directly with complicity in the matter; but he swore by all the saints in the calendar that he knew nothing of the house, except that it was an inn, that he never stopped there, and was surprised to hear anything bad of it. Whether he spoke the truth or not, we had no proof against him, and were fain to take advantage of his conveyance to quit St. Marie as expeditiously as possible.

After reaching the coast, I went back to Leghorn, and thence to Rome. Mr. Bradshaw travelled with me all the way; as his business required him to remain some time at the latter place, we took rooms together. One day as we were smoking our cigars on the balcony, the servant came to say that there was a man and a woman below who insisted on seeing us.

"Perhaps they are our old friends, Christophe and Nina," Bradshaw quizzically remarked. The servant introduced them, and we both stared at them in amazement. There were Christophe and Nina, in very truth, looking very handsome and happy, and not the least abashed in our presence.

"In the name of all that is impudent," I ejaculated, "what does this mean?"

Both began to jabber Italian together, and talked so unintelligibly, that it was some time before I could extract any meaning from what they said. When we did finally comprehend it, we learned the strangest part of the night's doings at the Casino.

They were now, it seemed, man and wife. Some months before I had first found Christophe in Rome, he had fallen in love with Nina, who was visiting it during the carnival with her father and two brothers. The men were connected with an extensive system of brigandage, in which they made themselves useful by serving as spies, to ascertain the departures and routes of travellers. The girl assured us that she did her part in this work through compulsion, and only tolerated it because she knew not what else to do. Christophe gained her affections, and easily induced her to consent to leave her villainous relations for his protection;

but the plot was discovered by the crafty father, and he hurried the girl away before it could be consummated. He evidently considered her too valuable to his pursuits to lose. After this, Christophe lost all trace of her till he met her at the Casino. At this point Nina took up the story, and said she had been leading a wretched existence at that robber's den, where she was compelled to be a spectator of repeated acts of violence and crime. In sending her out after coffee for us upon that night, she knew very well that her father intended that she should drug it; but she threw the powders into the stove which he had slipped into her hand.

After Bradshaw and myself had retired, some unguarded action of Nina betrayed the true character of Christophe to the brother who stayed below, who drew his pistol, and threatened him with instant death if he gave any warning. The poor boy was thus compelled to allow himself to be personated by one of the villains. Until the defeat of the two who had undertaken the plundering, and perhaps the killing of Bradshaw and myself, his guardian relaxed not his vigilance; but when the wounded man came trembling down the stairs, and cried to him to fly with them instantly, he seized Nina by the arm, and forced her, weeping and struggling, along with them. Poor Christophe was in a sad dilemma; he knew that he must keep his beloved in sight, or probably lose her forever; and on the other hand, his absence would subject him

to the gravest suspicions. He quickly resolved to secure Nina first, if possible, and trust to the future for his exoneration. The ruffians took to the mountains as soon as they could be reached. The one with whom I had struggled was so badly wounded that he was left at a resort of the brigands, with Nina to nurse him, while the other two pushed on to join their confreres in the mountains, charging the girl not to leave till they came or sent for her. On the day following their departure, the wounded man died; on the next, Christophe appeared, and the two departed unceremoniously. They traced us to Leghorn, where they were married, and thence to Rome, picking up a subsistence in some way. And here they were, having found us at last, eager that we would believe their story, and that we would employ them both.

I had no reason to discredit it; there was not a flaw in the statement, so far as I could see. Bradshaw heard it all through with great sternness, and questioned them both, and at last added that they had made out a very clear case for themselves. They were installed forthwith as our housekeepers; and when we broke up our establishment in the fall, Bradshaw had become so much attached to them, that he offered to take them to England. They were both fearful of the malevolence of Nina's father and brother, and the offer was joyfully accepted. I bade them all adieu at Marseilles, and have neither seen nor heard from them since.

A SNUFF-BOX.

BY ETTA W. PIERCE.

HAD Philip Van Brun been a wise man and sent his own soft heart to the wall, and married in accordance with the wishes of the family, Philip, truth to tell, would have gained much thereby. He need never have worn frayed linen then, nor dined off a cold joint on Sundays, nor gathered crow's-feet so rapidly at the corners of his eyes—nor, in short, have fallen an early victim to the wear and tear of that most trying strait of human existence—aristocratic poverty.

But Philip was not wise—on the contrary, he was a remarkably silly fellow, and, struggle as he would, he could never conquer—the world, nor the family pride, nor, hardest of all, the family spleen. So he died, and was buried and forgotten.

In a shabby little breakfast-room, a month after the burial of the dead man, Sandy Van Brun sat, vaguely interrogating the depths of his coffee-cup, and sighing:

"So I must have done with painting now, and take the clerkship—confound it! I hate law! Confound Gaylord's musty office! I shall never be an artist now."

"Aweel," murmured Affry, housekeeper and servant in one, as she gathered up the forks, with the mourning rows upon her cap flapping. "Puir laddie! Puir laddie!"

"And Bess," said the boy, "what will Bess do? Go out governessing, or something of that sort, I'll be bound."

"Yes, Sandy."

She answered for herself, for she was standing near, leaning against the mantel, and twirling her mourning handkerchief nervously round her fingers. A girl some two or three years the senior of the lad, with a low forehead, and long straight nose, and large eyes of a neutral tint somewhere between brown and gray.

Sandy pushed his chair back from the table.

"I wonder," he said, "if they know of this at Longford? There is Corney Van Brun, driving his four-in-hand, and living on an allowance of twenty thousand per year; and Madge—what do you suppose that handsome Madge pays for the lace she wears? Humph! We come of one stock."

"Sandy!" with a little deprecatory look from the neutral eyes.

"And blood is thicker than water," grumbled Sandy.

Bess dropped her hand on the boy's shoulder.

"What is this?" she began, in a chirrupy voice, which had, however, a hint of tears in it, "you and I are not afraid of work, Sandy? Poor papa was not. He drudged for us early and late, his life long. Neither do we sigh for Corney's four-in-hand, nor Madge's laces."

"Bess, it's very hard for me to give up painting."

"Yes."

"And our birthright is our birthright! Why shouldn't that old ogress at Longford do something for us, as well as for them? Papa was her son, and we are his children."

Some little fine wrinkles showed for a moment along Bess's smooth forehead.

"It is better to do for ourselves, if only for the sake of poor papa's memory," she said.

Sandy twisted his shoulders.

"Aweel," murmured Affry, who began to feel herself impelled in opposite currents betwixt the two dear children of her dead master. "I dinna ken, but there's a ring at the bell, bairns, and I'll e'en gae down."

Bess dropped her hand from Sandy's

shoulder, and walked away to the window. It is noticeable that persons in misfortune have always an air of expectancy. An early ring at the bell was not uncommon, and yet Bess leaned her brows against the pane, and listened with bated breath to Affry's receding step on the stair, and the opening of the door below.

Nobody there but a tall footman in livery, holding a letter in his white-gloved hand, and asking for Miss Van Brun. Presently the letter came up stairs, borne gravely by Affry.

"Longford!" gasped Bess, staring at the pompous seal.

"Longford!" echoed Sandy, leaping from his chair. "A letter from Longford! What can it mean?"

Bess trembled a little as she broke the seal. It was a brief letter, however—too brief, by far, for the expectation it had excited—acting with peculiar dampness on the bold and half-formed hopes springing up like lightning in Sandy's brain. It ran something in this wise:

"Miss Van Brun is requested to make one of a small dinner-party at Longford this day. She will meet three of her late father's family, as well as her paternal grandmother, whose carriage, if agreeable, will be sent for her at four."

Could anything have been more curt? Affry, however, beamed.

"Lor, now!" she cried, "that comes o' the name, I am sure. I mind me weel, lassie, as how your puir mither wa'd ha' ye christened Elizabeth, just to soften the dame's heart; and you the reddest baby ever seen, done up in white flannel; and it was I as embroidered the dress, though, puir dear," sighing, "'twas no use, after all, for the dame never came to the christening."

Bess, half crushing the letter in her two pink palms, glanced askant at Sandy, with a perplexed and questioning face.

"Shall you go?" he muttered.

"Shall I not?" she answered him.

"It is odd they do not mention me," he grumbled; "go? of course! Who knows what will come of it?"

Bess put on her mourning dress like one in a dream that day, smoothing out her braids with unuseful care before the little mirror in her attic room, and fastening at her throat a brooch of her dead father's hair. Then, with a shy backward glance, cast over

her glass, Bess went gravely down; and lo! punctual at four, there rolled into the court an elegant brougham, drawn by a pair of sleek bay horses, with silver-mounted harnesses glittering brightly in the sun.

"Don't let them snub you, Bess," was Sandy's parting injunction, as he went with her down the stifling stairway—she fresh as a daisy in her sober black, he a trifle flushed and excited. "They have never forgiven us," he continued, "they never will forgive us, for being our mother's children, you know."

Bess, pausing at the door, looked at him wistfully.

"Sandy," she began, "would you mind if I should tell this grand-dame of ours a little about yourself—how talented you are, how hard it is for you to go into that law office—how much you long to become a painter? I am quite determined about myself, you know, but you—"

He interrupted her, half angry, half amused.

"You precious little goosel! She would eat you! No, I'll have none of that! You shall not go begging for me! I ask for my birthright, not charity."

"But, Sandy—"

He chafed.

"Come, come! That coachman is tired of waiting. See him stare! Kiss me, Bess. Much good may your stately name do you this day; only if Corney Van Brun ogles you, or Madge chaffs you with those handsome eyes of hers—"

She was in the brougham before he had finished. Sandy nodded to her, the coachman climbed to his seat, and, in a state of mind half surprise and half bewilderment, Bess found herself rolling away in the Van Brun carriage.

Alone, fighting with a rising phantom of fear and misgiving that seemed to spring out of the corners of the carriage—out of its velvet, its plate-glass and French varnish, perhaps. She knew nothing of Longford, no, nor the dwellers thereof, except, indeed, that they had hated her mother always, and broken her father's heart, which was quite enough to know. Only once she had seen Gran Van Brun. It was of a Sabbath morning, long and long ago, when she was walking with poor dear papa past a church, through whose doors richly-dressed men and women were pouring in to divine worship; and there had alighted near them from an

elegant carriage a little wrinkled old lady, in lace and velvet, and a prayer-book in her hand, and this old lady had given them a long hard look, and frowned grimly; and then poor papa had held her little hand in such a sad, close, loving way! That was Gran Van Brun.

Bess trembled at the memory for a moment; then her good little heart warmed with a thought of Sandy and his unfortunate painting, and then she grew quite calm and brave again. She looked from the carriage window, a charming white road, lined with suburban villas, and filled with scents of white lilac and hawthorn, and blossoming shrubs; and lo! before she was aware, the brougham had rolled up a long avenue of trees, and stopped.

This was her father's home—this was Longford—this great rambling stone house, with its ivied gables and broad casements, and lawns and terraces—his fond lips had familiarized her with them all years before. She was quite sure she would have known the place anywhere. With a faint mist of tears before her eyes, she alighted and went up the steps.

A sleek old footman opened the door to her, and then Bess heard a sudden rustle of silk, and a little clatter of high-heeled slippers; and some one came sweeping down the broad oak stairs—broad enough to have driven up a coach-and-four—meeting Bess almost upon the threshold. It was a young girl a few years her senior, shimmering in lace, and violet silk, and pearls—a rare queenly blonde, pale as a snowdrift, with yellow hair, and eyes like lapis lazuli. She recoiled a step at the sight of that other figure in mourning; then she held out the tips of her jewelled fingers.

"Ah, it is you then?" with a flitting smile. "Miss Elizabeth Van Brun? So you have really come! Jeanette will take your shawl. May I ask you to wait in the drawing-room? Grandma is not down yet."

"And you are?" began Bess, looking at the beauty in blank admiration.

"I—O, a cousin of the house—Madge Van Brun, at your service," dropping her a mocking courtesy, that made the violet silk rustle again through all its long bright folds. "Jeanette, open the door! You will not mind my leaving you? Here are books and music—pray amuse yourself till grandma comes."

Back swung the door on its silver hinges.

"*Allons, mademoiselle,*" murmured the French maid, and Bess stood in the drawing-room of Longford, half stifled for the moment with its grandeur and gloom.

Gloom was just the word for it. All the purple and gold there—all the afternoon sunshine filtered in through the scarlet-flowered casement vines, could never relieve the black oak panelling, or the grim family portraits, hanging in their tarnished frames on the walls, or the massive old furniture, that looked as if it had come down untouched from the days of Peter Stuyvesant. No cheer, no welcome anywhere—everything grand and forbidding.

Dropping down into a purple gulf of a chair, and looking therein much like a frightened child, Bess waited. Doors opened and shut somewhere above her—she hears voices in distant parts of the house—an ornate clock near by cut the air with its fine sweet silvery strokes. The portraits upon the wall, Van Brun faces, such as Van Dyke liked to paint, and remarkably like each other, stared gravely down upon her—the alien daughter of the house, but with the same lustrous hair and the same red lip that the painter had given to those haughty dames in powder and brocade. Bess began to weary. She turned in her great purple chair with a sigh.

A sigh so low and soft, that one would hardly have thought it could reach to that curtained window down the whole length of the room; and yet, Bess heard a book drop there, and directly the curtains parted, and under their two massive folds a tall figure stood, looking out at her, with dark quizzical eyes.

"Alone," said a voice; "so they have deserted you, Miss Van Brun. This is dull."

He had read the secret of her sigh. Bess rose up, flushing faintly.

"I did not know," she said, "that any one was here—I am waiting for Madam Van Brun."

The tall gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"Exactly; and you are the granddaughter of whom she told us to-day. I had only to look at these family portraits to recognize you."

Bess bowed stiffly.

"My grandmother is, I trust, quite well," she said.

"Yes. At present I suspect she is napping. She does not dine till six. Pardon this intrusion, I beg you. Possibly I might

have been asleep myself in the window yonder."

What had awakened him?—her sigh, or the dropping of his book? Both together, perhaps. Bess regarded him gravely. A haughty, broad-shouldered fellow, brown as a nut.

"O," she said, quickly, "you are my Cousin Corney." Up went his strongly-marked brows, in a grimace which he immediately checked.

"Unfortunately, no," replied he, "I am only a—that is, a distant relative"—of which little fib, provoked by her tone, let me say he at once repented—"Mr. Corney is still in town. His sister is here, however, and the younger brood. Perhaps you have seen her?"

"Yes," answered Bess.

"In the name of all that's courteous, why isn't she here entertaining you?" thought he, yawning; "clearly some one ought to do it—it looks as if the task had fallen upon me."

But how to begin. This audacious nut-brown fellow looked at the little maiden, vaguely troubled.

"What a peach-blossom of a girl!" he was saying to himself; "shall I try her with books? Bah! what has a woman with such a face got to do with books? Music? No, she is in black, and her eyes are full of unwritten dirges. I know of something better still."

Then he spoke aloud.

"Miss Van Brun, have you been at Longford before?"

"Never."

"Then," smiling, "perhaps you will allow me to show you what a charming place it is. You find it dreary sitting here, and it wants a full hour to dinner."

Bess's eyes brightened. He had opened the door while speaking, through which sweet scents came floating, spicy and warm, as if a flask of eastern perfumes had been spilled near by. Beyond this door Bess saw a long low corridor winding away in a purplish shadow, and heard the voices of children. There was no gainsaying the look he gave her.

"Come," he urged, gently, "the juvenile Van Bruns are already before us—they will be glad to make your acquaintance."

Bess, pausing in the doorway, flashed a sudden look upon him, that was full of shy dignity.

"I think," she said, "that you have forgotten to tell me your name."

"Pardon me—I am John Essex, quite at your service, now and always;" and Mr. Essex bowed gravely.

"You are a guest at Longford?"

"Yes," he answered her.

And then they walked on again. Up the corridor, and into a wilderness of powdery bloom, and honeyed parasites, and damp intoxicating odors, Mr. Essex darted up to a stony Undine, standing in her marble basin, all in a web of glistening spray, which the wind was flaunting in scarfs of finest lace across her desolate face, and caught up, in a sudden whirl, a bundle of muslin and blue ribbons, and yellow hair, laughing, as he cried:

"What have we here? Grandma Van's aloe plants, and grandma's precious progeny drowning themselves in a fountain! Fie, Flossie, see what I have brought you."

They came trooping around Bess—wild, golden-haired children, loose in a frolic among the grass and trellises. First shyly, then boldly, then uproariously they came. Flossie alone was content to kiss her dimpled hand to this new-comer from over Mr. Essex's shoulder.

"Who is it?" whispered the little voice, timidly.

"Your cousin," answered Essex, grave to excess; "be sure that you treat her well."

"She's not so pretty as Madge," said the child, doubtfully.

"Really?"

"And nobody wears black at grandma's dinner parties."

Here Mr. Essex fled suddenly with the child, and Julia and Jack were fain to follow after. As this did not quite assimilate with Mr. Essex's views, Jack returned after a time, quite staid and manly, to show his new-found relative Grandma Van's century plant in bloom, and sundry other glories of a like nature, until Mr. Essex's voice was heard calling to them from the terrace outside. There he stood, with Flossie clinging to his neck, and Julie to his hand.

"Well, Miss Van Brun," he said, dropping Julie's little digits to help her down the steps, "do you know all about the air-plants, and the japonicas, and that last thrush's nest Jack pilfered? I suspect this is a day of leisure at Longford—I have not seen Madam True."

"O," answered Julie, with her ringlets all in a toss, "Madam True is dismissed—we are to have a new governess. She was too forward, mamma said—she did not know her place."

"Come and show Cousin Bess the swans!" clamoured Jack, proudly.

Essex cast her a look. She stood in the sun, a veritable child among children, with her delicious color and happy laughing eyes—lost to all troubles, he was sure, and to everything else but the flowers and the sunshine. He fell into place beside her, and walked on beside her after that, infinitely amused.

Was there ever such a short happy half hour, lost in such mazes of spice and bloom? They walked the broad grounds over; they loitered along the stone balustrade, with scents of heliotrope and honeysuckle clinging about them, and talked to the wolf-mastiffs, and the great gorgeous peacocks; and though Jack *would* smear his white trousers in feeding swans, and Julie's hair would blow out of curl, and Flossie's blue ribbons get rumpled, the dignity of the occasion was hardly surpassed by its pleasure. Mr. Essex drew forth his watch at last.

"Come," he said, smiling, first upon the children, and last upon Miss Van Brun; "it is time that we were paying our court in the drawing-room. If I mistake not there is a courier abroad for us already."

So they went in.

Madge Van Brun, standing tall and white, like a day-lily in one of the broad windows, looked wickedly at Essex from behind the bars of her fan.

"How good of you," she began, her sleek lids drooping as he came towards her; "do you find her interesting?"

"Very."

"And pray what is required of me? Must I present her to grandma?"

"I think you must."

She made a little grimace; then Bess felt the tap of a Spanish fan upon her arm, and she was moving down the room in Madge's footsteps, with a score of eyes upon her, and hearing, mid the rustle and the bustle all around, some such whispers as these:

"Who is it?"

"One of Philip's children."

"He made a low marriage."

"And was disinherited."

"No hope for her then."

"Good eyes."

Madge, meantime, had stopped short before an easy-chair wherein some one was sitting bolt upright, watching their approach from under a pair of gray uncompromising brows. Yes, the selfsame old woman that Bess remembered so well at the church door, with the same frown and the same wrinkles—there she sat, in her dress of stiff black satin, holding in one hand a handkerchief bordered with Alençon point, and in the other an enamelled snuff-box.

The girl's heart gave a great bound, and grew still.

"Who is that?" queried Madam Van, sharply, eyeing the sweet face and black-robed figure.

"One of the lost sheep of the house of Brun," said Madge, maliciously. "Do you not recognize her?"

"Come here!" cried madam; "so it is you? and you got tired waiting for me, and John Essex carried you off to the children? Very good of John. Kiss me."

Bess, in some inward trepidation, bent and touched her lips to the withered cheek.

"Dear madam," she faltered, "I am very, very glad to see you!"

"Madge, give her a chair," said madam.

The chair was set with ill grace.

"Now," said madam, spitefully, as she motioned Bess into it, "my guests know who you are, and I'm sure they won't stare at you—they are too well bred."

"*Gardez bien!*" laughed Madge, under her breath.

"Madge," said Grandma Van, "you have puffed your hair too high, and your dress is ugly."

The crisp silken folds were smoothed down by two mocking white hands.

"Thank you, grandma."

"You look badly in violet," said the old lady.

"How good of you to tell me!"

"Go away!" cried Grandma Van, with a whimsical shrug of her high shoulders.

Round whirled the snow-white beauty, that stiff violet figure all in a flutter against the easy-chair.

"There was an old woman, and what do you think!

She lived upon nothing but—"

Grandma Van raised a sudden shrill cry.

"My snuff-box! Madge, how dare you! Catch it, quick! it is rolling away!"

"O dear!" cried Madge, in great consternation.

Without waiting to be bidden, Bess dropped down upon the tufted floor, searching it, quite breathless, with those small flexible hands of hers.

"It will be broken—it will, indeed," cried Grandma Van.

"What?" said John Essex, coming up beside her.

Madge pressed a scoffing white finger to her lip.

"Only a snuff-box," she laughed.

"Pray allow me to find it," said Essex, to the kneeling figure on the carpet.

But Gran Van Brun waved him grimly off.

"Let her alone," she said.

So he stood, and watched the search demurely. The box had rolled across the room, and was lying in a corner, with its lid cracked straight across—that bright shining lid, whereon a crest was painted in the black enamel. Flushed and breathless, Bess brought it, at last.

"Madam, it is injured," she said, "and the snuff is spilled."

For answer, madam only dropped the box into the pocket of her satin gown, and rising briskly up, took Bess's arm.

"Now," she announced, curtly, "we will go out to dinner."

So, leaning thus on poor discarded Philip's daughter, Grandma Van Brun led the way into the great dining-saloon, magnificent with plate and Sevres, and carved oak, and purple and fine linen generally, while Madge followed after, with John Essex, shrugging her blonde shoulders, yet possessed of some vague uneasiness at seeing the old dame at the head of the board seating Philip's daughter on her right hand.

"Mr. Essex," she murmured, with a side-long look, "do you think her beautiful?"

A plain query. He answered it evasively.

"She has fine eyes."

Madge caught upon her jewelled wrist a rose, falling, faint with its own sweets, from the loops of her pale hair.

"You know the story, of course," she said; "her father married out of his sphere. Grandma has never forgiven him. The children are disinherited."

After the grand dinner was over, and they were all back again in the drawing-room, and Madge sat discoursing such music as the angels themselves might bend to listen to, John Essex stood beside her, and turned the music leaves, and Grandma Van

beckoned twice and thrice to a slight dark figure huddling apart, with a rapturous mist on her lashes. Straightway the little maid arose and went to her side.

"You have a brother," said Grandma Van.

Bess's heart leaped.

"O yes!" she cried, eagerly, "Sandy!"

"A dawdling fellow, I hear," frowned the old lady, "wasting his silly time in idle drawings. Gaylord has offered him a clerkship, he tells me—has he accepted it?"

"Yes," faltered Bess, but this time with a sinking heart.

"I am glad," remarked Grandma Van, grimly tapping the snuff-box, which she had again resumed. "And you—what will you do, my dear?"

"I shall be a governess," answered Bess, meekly.

"That is good," with a nod.

"But, dear madam, Sandy does not dawdle his time away—he is very talented—he is indeed! He can paint and draw—O, so many beautiful things!"

"Humph!" said Grandma Van.

"And we love each other very dearly—he is like poor papa—so much like him!" sighed Bess.

"Humph!" again.

The dame's high shoulders turned completely on the poor child—they, and a pinch of Scotch snuff, quite extinguished the conversation, only Grandma Van turned back to say, curtly, "I have ordered the brougham at nine."

At nine it came. Bess was only too glad to go. She was aching with such a sense of weariness and disappointment that she could hardly keep the silly tears from her eyes. There was no hope for Sandy, she saw—no, none whatever.

She tied on her bonnet in Miss Van Brun's elegant dressing-room. The party below were fast dispersing, and as she came down the stairs Mr. Essex crossed quickly at their foot, and drew her hand through his arm.

It was a clear moonlit night. The brougham was waiting at the hall door, and Mrs. Van Brun's coachman sat on the box, with his sleepy head lolling forward on his breast, the reins idly hanging in his hand, the horses fretting impatiently. Mr. Essex, just in the act of handing Bess to her place, paused.

"What ails the man?" he cried.

Some long flashing folds of silk, violet-tinted, and exhaling sandal-wood odors, went rustling past them.

"He has been drinking," answered a careless voice.

"Is he quite safe?"

"I presume so—at least, there is no one else to go."

Mr. Essex lifted Bess into the carriage.

"Good-night," he said, soothingly; "do not be alarmed—some one will be near you."

Off through the moonlight and the silent night, swiftly, recklessly, the brougham drove away. But for that whispered promise, the way would have been terrible. As it was, Mrs. Van Brun's carriage had an out-rider, galloping swift and steady at the wheel, even into the dingy court wherein Affry's lamp was burning brightly at a closed shutter. Bess, meeting Sandy half way up the stair, sprang into his arms, sobbing and laughing with over-excitement, as the last of her great grand visit, in the shape of that brougham, with its drunken coachman and silent attendant, went vanishing altogether, like Cinderella's fairy equipage, into the night.

There was no question about Gaylord's clerkship after that. Through the Red Sea of rage and despondency, Sandy came forth duly resigned, having buried his pet ambition, never to revive it, alas! except in charcoal-sketches on his battered old desk at the office, or in some smothered sigh, perhaps, when nobody was by to hear.

Consequently, when Grandma Van Brun shuffled off her mortal coil, as she did at last, in the natural course of things, Sandy heard of the event, and of the old dame's will, and, more particularly, of a certain legacy therein for Bess, and only smiled faintly, and set himself down to work again.

"Ah," murmured the lad, "it is as I once said—she could never forgive us for being our mother's children."

"Unto Elizabeth, daughter of my late son Philip, I give and bequeath one snuff-box, the same to remain in charge of my executor, until such a time as it may be called for by the said Elizabeth."

That was Bess's legacy. Half-laughing and half-crying, the poor lad thought of her, far away at some little seaside watering-place, pent up in the Van Brun nursery, with such diminutive tyrants as Jack and

Julie and Flossie, and doing there all sorts of drudgery under the name of governess. Bess's situation had come to her long before—one, in sooth, that she had found far easier to obtain than to endure.

He fancied Madge scornful and haughty; he fancied Corney ogling her through his gold-rimmed glass, much as he might have done some favorite horse; he saw her tormented in a thousand ways, and growing thin, and sorrowful, and pale. Not that Sandy ever gleaned aught of this from Bess, or from her dear cheery letters; but some bird in the air must have whispered it, and it was very hard—it was, indeed!

"I wonder," said Madge Van Brun, sitting at her toilet, while Bess stood dressing her blonde hair, "I do wonder whatever became of Grandma Van's diamonds. Nothing has been seen of them since her death."

Bess turned to the dressing-table. She did not care to talk. Her head ached, and she was tired.

"What jewels will you wear?" she said.

"Spiteful old thing!" murmured Madge, intent upon her own cogitations; "she always knew how I coveted that set! They were brought from Amsterdam a hundred years ago—real Indian diamonds! Do you think she could have swallowed them before dying? I will wear the emeralds John Essex admired last night."

Bess smiled faintly.

"Cleopatra drank pearls—grandma might have eaten diamonds."

"Fancy the sensation they would have created here," pursued Madge, enviously; "there was a tiara and necklace, and bracelets and brooches—O dear! Their loss is as great a disappointment to me as Longford is to mamma. Just to think that nobody yet knows who is to have Longford! Bah! the absurd old woman!"

Bess gave the last touch to the royal hair.

"Perhaps you would call Jeanette now," she said, wearily; "the children are waiting to go down to the shore."

Madge regarded herself in the mirror opposite.

"Really your taste is exquisite, Bess. When I am Mrs. John Essex, you shall be my first maid of honor. How those children worry you—don't they? Mamma has quite spoiled Flossie, and Jack is a Cossack. There—you can go."

The sun was going down behind the des-

olate sandhills of Long Beach, with all the pomp of his royalty flaunting—scarlet, and purple, and gold, streaking sky, and shore, and sea. The tide was coming in, in long, lazy, undulating swells, its small waves curling crisply up the beach, kissed by a languid south wind, full of sweet marshy odors. Where were the children?

Neither in the house nor about it. Bess peered furtively down the long halls, the broad piazzas, and into the bowling-alleys, but in vain. They had gone down to the shore before her, and there was nothing to do but follow after.

She made the circuit of the beach, panting and breathless. Nothing there, either, except Flossie's hat flung upon the sands, and a fortress, half-completed, of pretty pebbles. Vaguely wondering, Bess paused, in sheer exhaustion, to take breath against a jag of rocks facing toward the sea. There was a little pallor upon her face, beautiful with its wide cool forehead and scarlet lips. The lashes, too, had a weary droop. She stood there a long time, watching sky and surf, and the trailing smoke of the steamers on the low purple horizon. A snatch of song quivered faintly on her tongue:

"O galleys, bound for Tunis,
Spread out your wings of oars,
And bear me to my captive love
Who lies among the Moors."

Whir, went a plover over Bess's head; then there was a dip of oars near by, and a wherry came dancing round the point, like an enchanted thing, to the sound of childish laughter, and small voices, and the tiny clapping of hands. Bess saw a flutter of Flossie's long curls, and heard her own name shouted like a bugle-blast in Jack's resonant voice; then the wherry grated against the shore, and the rocks swarmed.

"We've been down to Shipping Point," announced Jack, swelling with importance, as he came clambering to her; "we couldn't wait for you, you were too long. Mr. Essex rowed us."

In a breath something dropped into Bess's hands—a great cluster of cardinal flowers, the smooth velvet of their petals as ruby and rich as if cut from a king's garment. They dripped their dew upon her as they fell.

"The tide would have soon carried these nixies off," laughed the voice of John Essex; "I only forestalled it."

Bess sprang down from her rock, flushing.

"Let us find the nixie's hats, if you please; "Aunt Kate objects to sunburn."

"I don't want to go home now," said Jack, stoutly.

"It will soon be dark," replied Bess.

John Essex looked annoyed.

"Do not go because of me," he said; "I shall deem myself very unfortunate if I am the means of driving you away."

"Why should I go because of you?" was Miss Van Brun's tart query.

"Why, indeed?" he answered, watching her with bright quizzical eyes.

There was no confusion in her face; nothing but a wrinkling of her smooth forehead. He was Madge's lover—the best match in her set, Mrs. Grundy said—a gentleman of leisure, and wealth, and cultivation; a remarkably agreeable companion, to be sure, but revolving in an orbit very far removed from Bess Van Brun. Meanwhile, Mr. Essex stood poking crabs and sprawling starfish industriously with the tip of her parasollette.

"May I ask," he said, at last, "Miss Van Brun, in what labyrinth of the hotel you are so completely hidden that one would never know of your existence here were it not for these children?"

Bess raised her eyes.

"Mr. Essex, I am sure, forgets my position," she said, with quiet dignity.

"O," cried Jack, "mamma says Bess is too pretty—says she wishes she'd leave off black—says gentlemen take notice of her."

Mr. Essex turned quickly toward the sea.

"What a lurid sunset!" he exclaimed; "and see the gulls; it is going to storm."

"Says servants ought to know their places better," cried Jack.

"Come here, Jack," called Mr. Essex, solemnly, "and look at the lights on Red Rock."

"No," refused Jack, "we can't stay now, Bess and Flossie are gone."

And lo! Miss Van Brun had flitted past, like a spirit, and was walking quietly away up the beach. He overtook her as they were crossing the long hotel piazza. She heard a firm step, an earnest whisper. It said:

"I wish you would allow me to be your friend, Miss Van Brun—I do, indeed!"

And Bess, answering nothing, but very pale and composed, swept strait on up the broad staircase—up to her own room, where, once alone, the foolish child flung

herself into a chair and burst into a most extraordinary storm of sobs and tears.

Magnificent was the hop at the great hall that night, and the lights and music and beauty thereof, and Madge Van Brun reigned belle, looking like an empress born in her high-throated velvet dress, with a line of seagreen emeralds in her pale hair.

But there was one casement in the great house, up to which the sweet waltz-music came floating, where a slender, black-robed figure sat in darkness, with her arms crossed on the sill, and her wide eyes fixed on a crescent moon, shining like a broken ring of fire in the dark purple west. A few cardinal flowers were drooping in a glass beside her. She sat quite as still as a figure in stone.

"What, Essex!" broke out a sudden voice somewhere on a balcony below. "Not dancing?"

"No, thank you," answered another voice, languidly.

"Man alive! And the Van Brun carrying all hearts by storm! What do you mean, sitting here smoking away like a grand Turk who has only to throw the handkerchief—"

"Is Miss Van Brun enjoying herself?"

"A trifle."

"I am very glad. Pray have a cigar."

"*Chacun a son gout!* Well, well!"

Then all grew still again.

After that, September came and went, in sunset and gold and purple, and there was a flutter among the gay birds of passage congregated at Long Beach—a spreading of migratory wings, until the broad piazzas were quite deserted, and the house began to assume its sober autumn look. A few, however, still lingered—among these the Van Bruns. Madge still walked the long halls regally, but with dark discontented eyes. John Essex still smoked his cigar on the western piazza, watchful of red September sunsets, and the blight of frosts in the low marshlands. There Jack Van Brun came to tell him, in confidence, that Bess was pining and ill, and that the Van Brun departure had been delayed because of her, and mamma was cross, and Madge also, and he wished Bess would hurry and get well. There Madge herself sat beside him on still moon-lighted nights, wrapped in some regal Indian shawl, all the discontent gone from her eyes, leaving them tender; and there, at last, John Essex saw, at

a window above, a pale sweet saddened face, looking dreamily down one day, and knew that Jack's desire was gratified, and the drudging little governess had already resumed her post.

Late that afternoon, Mr. Essex pushed his bamboo chair back to the wall, and stepping through the low window, found the parlor beyond quite deserted, except for a tiny figure in cashmere and ribbon, perched upon a sofa playing with a China doll. She looked up gravely.

"Madge is away, Mr. Essex."

"Indeed!"

"She went away in the carriage with mamma. Bess and I are alone."

Essex bent suddenly, and filled the child's hands with bonbons.

"Flossie," he said, "go and tell Miss Bess I am waiting to see her."

The child laid down her doll, and looked up with knit brows.

"What for?"

"You could never guess."

"She will want to know what for," persistently.

"I will tell her when she comes," said Mr. Essex.

Flossie stuffed the bonbons into the pockets of her apron, and darted away. Standing at the window, with hands clasped behind him, and a singular agitation in his haughty brown face, Mr. Essex waited for Miss Van Brun. She came at last, pale and wondering, a little thinner, a little frailer, perhaps, but ah, with such a sweet face! He placed a chair for her, but she declined it, and stood irresolute, with her hand on the door-knob.

"Miss Van Brun has gone out," she said.

"Yes," answered Essex.

The large eyes were raised inquiringly.

"Did you send for me?" she said.

"Yes," again.

A sudden scarlet flashed out on her cheek, like a blossom of fire, and then faded.

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to explain."

Gently he drew her into the seat she had refused. There was something in his face that made her own droop before it, in a white breathless heat, like a lily in the sun.

"Miss Van Brun," he began, his strong voice quivering through and through, "I have been waiting here, week after week—such restless, weary weeks!—just for one glimpse of your face, until patience has

ceased to be a virtue. Can you guess why I have called you to me now? Is there need for me to say? Look in my eyes and see."

She could not, dared not, but her voice was quite calm and clear, and she rose up from her chair with a little gesture full of dignity and grace.

"Mr. Essex, do not forget yourself!"

He stepped before her.

"Bess, I love you! I want you for my wife."

"I—I!" she gasped.

"You!"

She raised her eyes slowly, and saw the strong arms extended toward her, and the strong face above them grown pale and tremulous before the momentary wavering of a girl.

"Madge?" broke from her lips in a little choking cry.

He caught her to him, he held her fast; his kisses rained down on her bright hair.

"And what of Madge?" he said; "have I not loved you long enough?—ever since that first day at Longford!—and well enough—you have given me no peace since!—that you must talk of Madge now? What is she to you or me? Nothing! Lie still upon my heart!"

She clung to him one moment, like a child; the next she had broken abruptly away. There was a step in the hall; the door unclosed very softly, and Madge Van Brun stood upon the threshold.

If there was aught of agitation visible in the manner of either party, Miss Madge did not deign to notice it. She came in with a magnificent sweep, her rich carriage-dress trailing after her, her eyelids lowered, and smiling, gave her hand to Essex. He took it, but with an ominous face, and when she had sent her scornful stare around the room for Bess, she found that the little governess had already disappeared.

"Were you waiting for me, Mr. Essex?" asked the blonde beauty, graciously.

Mr. Essex assured her he was not. His business had been strictly with Miss Elizabeth. Then the lapis lazuli eyes glowed.

"I returned in haste," said Madge, softly, "because mamma was pressed to take tea at the Layton cottage, and wanted Flossie sent down. You pass that way sometimes, I am sure, in your afternoon row."

"Yes," said Mr. Essex, "frequently."

Miss Van Brun gave him a look.

"Would it be too much to ask you to

take Flossie? She will give you no trouble, and I shall deem it a great favor."

However Mr. Essex might have felt, he betrayed no annoyance.

"I will take her with pleasure," he said.

"Are you going at once?"

"If you desire it."

"I do, indeed. Mamma will be impatient."

It was Jeanette who brought the child, and not Bess. Inwardly chafing, Essex went away to his row. With the last echo of his retreating footstep, Madge sprang up from her chair, white and breathless, and rang the bell for Bess. Angry, disappointed, jealous mortals are invariably cruel. Bess appeared directly, very quiet, but nothing more.

"Go," began Madge, stabbing her through with those scornful eyes of hers, "you have been amusing yourself more agreeably than in teaching the children. You to angle openly for a gentleman like John Essex! It is conduct such as no person can tolerate."

The indignant blood leaped fierce and hot to Bess's cheek. She crested her head.

"Madge!" she warned.

Out broke Madge's white anger.

"How dare you!" she cried, stamping.

"Don't speak to me—I hate and despise you! John Essex, indeed! The New York train passes the station at seven o'clock."

"Yes."

"And the carriage stands below waiting. You understand?"

"Yes," again.

"Then go! You daring to think of him!—you—a mere beggar, with nothing but your baby face to recommend you! Bah! it is too much!"

Bess went up stairs. To resist this summary dismissal—to do aught, in fact, but obey it—never once entered her head. Madge was queen—here, as elsewhere.

The night was falling drearily. A white fog came creeping in from sea. The wind moaned around the corners of the house like a lost spirit. Bess listened to it with a blank bewildered face, as she packed her little travelling-bag, and donned bonnet and shawl for the last time. The children were absent, consequently she had no adieus to make. She drew her veil closely, and went down to the carriage.

Up to the way-station, the evening train came whirling, like some mighty monster,

but half-defined in the dusk. Bess crossed the platform, and took her place mechanically among the passengers. There was, somehow, a Hagar-like aspect about her that made one's heart ache as they looked upon her. She was going home to Sandy, with her situation lost, her little purse quite emptied by her illness at Long Beach, and, worse than that, with a sad despairing pain gnawing at her foolish young heart—a weary cruel pain, born altogether of two simple questions which she repeatedly asked herself: Where was John Essex? Had he known of her departure?

It was raining fast before the train reached its destination. Bess sat staring from the car window into the night beyond. She was very still. An old lady in Quaker drab leaned forward and touched her, quietly.

"My dear," she said, "is thee asleep? There is in New York."

No, not asleep, very far from it. The old lady thought what a sweet face the child had, and wondered where her attendant could be; then the crowd pushed and jostled, the kind eyes lost sight of her, and Bess was left standing on the platform in a state of painful hesitation.

Should she take a carriage? She thought of her empty purse, and said no. There was nothing to do but to venture forth into the streets on foot. Then a great fear stabbed her. What if she could not find Sandy? He had taken cheap lodgings in an obscure street near the law-office. She did not know the place, but the address was in her pocket. Something like a prayer rose to Bess's lips.

It was a brave heart, strong to the core, even while it beat so loudly. People crowded against her, stared at her, met her in throngs at every turn. A few raindrops fell softly. The pavement was reeking wet; the lamps stood out, like Cyclops's eyes, against the gloom. Overhead, a pale haggard moon glided in and out of the ragged clouds.

Suddenly on the pavement behind her Bess heard a ringing step. She quickened her pace. The step came on rapidly. Thrilling with an indefinable dread, the poor child was just breaking into absolute flight, when a voice, calling out of the shadow of a blue cotton umbrella, simultaneous with the footstep, brought her to a sudden stand.

"O Sandy!"

"Bess! Is it possible?"

She flung herself upon his shoulder with a dry sob.

"What are you doing here?" he cried, in wild amaze; "what has happened?"

"I was looking for you; are you going home?"

"To be sure. Why, Bess! Why, my dear child, you are drenched!—you are white as a ghost! Pray take my arm—it is but a step further—we are almost there!"

And Bess, taking refuge under the blue umbrella, told her story brokenly in Sandy's ear, as they walked home to his lodgings, not omitting any part, unless, perhaps, a few foolish words of John Essex's. They had reached the door ere it was done, and entering, Sandy, flushed and angry, led the way up some steep flights of stairs, and into the meagre lodging-room, where Bess found herself directly ensconced in his one easy-chair, and he kneeling on the hearth beside her, raking a few coals to light in the smouldering grate.

"There's another room adjoining this that you can have, I'm sure," Sandy said, cheerily. "I'll go down and see the landlady, and furthermore, bargain for a change of clothes for you. Why did you never write me that you were ill?"

And after these matters had been satisfactorily arranged, and Bess had exchanged her wet garments for dry ones, she came back to him, with a flush on her cheek, and standing before him on the hearth, shook out the folds of her funny old dress with a low mocking courtesy.

"Sandy, have you any supper?"

"Crackers, and herring, and black tea," said Sandy.

"Very good."

"And a bit of butter."

"Permit me to spread the board at once. I am hungry."

Out from the mysteries of Sandy's cupboard there was drawn a little cracked teapot, wherein the tea was put steeping upon the glowing coals; then Bess laid the cloth, with a plate or two, and some cups without saucers, and Sandy roasted the herring to a turn; and, really, it was a sumptuous supper, for the weak black tea was drank as if it had been ambrosia, and the herring and crackers eaten like a feast for the gods. Suddenly Bess paused, and reflectively counting the crumbs upon her plate:

"Sandy," said she, "how much money have you?"

He drew forth his purse with great gravity, and emptied upon the table beside her its contents—two shillings.

"Is that all?" she cried, aghast.

"All at present," said Sandy.

Bess looked hard at the remnants of the supper.

"I don't see how I can stay here then."

"But you will!" cried Sandy.

"How can you keep me?"

"You shall have half my crust."

Bess shook her head, smiling but tearful.

"Sandy, we've been treated badly, haven't we?"

"Deuced shabby!" said Sandy.

Then their hands crept together, and they sat silent for a long time. Presently he felt her start. Her slight fingers tightened around his own.

"Sandy!" she cried out, with sudden eager emphasis.

"Bess!"

"I am going for my snuff-box!"

"Snuff-box?" vaguely.

"For Grandma Van's legacy. Don't you know? Gaylord has it. I will go with you to the office in the morning. I will indeed!"

He was quite startled by her vehemence.

"And pray what earthly good is a snuff-box going to do you, Bess?"

"I cannot tell," she cried, soberly; "it may be of value—who knows?"

"It may," said Sandy, "humph!"

"But this is such a strait—"

"And small favors should be thankfully received—"

"She could hardly have bequeathed me such a thing for actual use, I am sure," murmured Bess.

Sandy laughed outright.

"I should think not! Did she leave the snuff inside, I wonder?"

However, Bess was not to be laughed out of her project. Going to sleep that night in her bare dingy room, she thought long and unaccountably of snuff-boxes. Sleeping, she dreamed of them—dazzling circles of precious metal, with the Van Brun crest on the lids, and snuff falling therefrom in showers of powdered gold. Such snuff! It sifted into her hair—she wore it crusted inch deep into her garments—she trod it, bright and shining, beneath her feet—in fact, she had been securely shut down beneath an enormous lid, and was turning rapidly to snuff,

when the morning light beneficently awoke her, and Bess sprang into consciousness with a great sigh of relief.

She dressed for her walk to the law-office with unusual care. She was going with Sandy to unearth her legacy, and her fair face, purified by pain and sickness, looked like a lily under its soft luxuriant hair.

"Sandy, is my shawl on even?" she said, gayly; "and do I really look like an adventuress going to seek my fortune?"

"Wonderfully like one."

Then they started away.

"Well," said Sandy, with a shrug, as he tucked her under his arm, "shall we dine to-day on herbs or a stalled ox?"

"Wait until I have seen my snuff-box."

"Here is the office, and there's Gaylord at the window. You can soon make your decision. Pray who is that fellow staring at you over the way?"

Bess, already half inside the door, turned, and over the rampart of Sandy's shoulder, saw standing upon the opposite pavement, Mr. John Essex, tall and haughty, and regarding her like one under the influence of a spell.

"O Sandy!" gasped Bess, red to the temples; but Sandy, all unconscious, was drawing, relentless, up the stairs.

"Now, do be calm, Bess," he implored; "Gaylord is such a sharp one—he looks right through you. Don't make a guy of us."

Not she. Sandy had quite mistaken the cause of her emotion. Gaylord, nice and gentlemanly, looked up as his clerk entered, and then, seeing Bess, came forward to receive her, his eyes twinkling a little when her errand was made known to him.

"O yes," he said, briskly taking up his keys, "he remembered the legacy quite well. It had been waiting at the office a long time for Miss Van Brun. He would bring it at once."

Sandy sat gravely down to his desk. Evidently he was not interested—no more was Bess. Dear me! she was thinking of John Essex's eyes, not of snuff-boxes. Suddenly she heard Gaylord's voice.

"My dear young lady," he said, "will you turn and look?"

He had laid the legacy down close at her elbow; he was leaning upon the desk above it, with some wrappers in his hand. Bess turned. O, had a shaft of dazzling light swooped down into her eyes that she re-

colled so suddenly, and with that sharp cry on her lips, before the sight of Grandma Van's snuff-box? There it was, the ugly enamelled thing, with its lid cracked straight across, just as she remembered it, lying on the carpet at Longford. She rubbed her eyes—she looked again, and all round that lid, huddling rough and thick together in imperial fellowship, Bess saw row after row of sparkling diamonds, blinking weirdly at her as she gazed. Was she dreaming again? She caught up the box. Diamonds everywhere, dripping down its shallow sides, blazing like eyes of fire as they clung around its edge! Quite wild for a moment, Bess dashed off the gorgeous lid. Then it was Sandy's turn to cry out. No snuff there, neither of the Scotch name, nor yet the powdered gold of Bess's dream—only a bundle of papers, crammed close into the narrow space, and rising faintly, as if instinct with life, when the bright lid fell. Mr. Gaylord picked them up.

"These, my dear young lady," said he, "are a few bank accounts and the deeds of Longford; they go along with your box! It was Mrs. Van Brun's particular desire that you should have Longford."

"Bess," whispered Sandy, "will it be stalled ox for dinner?"

She answered him with her eyes. Then there was silence.

* * * * *

Some one stood waiting for Bess at the foot of the stairs when she came down—a tall masculine figure, who advanced boldly and drew her hand through his arm. He

looked at her with dark reproachful eyes.

"Bess, how could you run away from me so?" asked Mr. John Essex.

"Do you not know?" answered Bess.

"I know what Madge was pleased to tell me—that you had been seized with some unaccountable whim, and gone without a word."

"That was very good of Madge."

"O, but I did not believe it!" answered John Essex.

It was all made plain to him before the walk was over. Lovers, in general, have a way of smoothing out difficulties that is quite refreshing. So it came to pass that Mr. Essex made a third party at Sandy's wonderful dinner, and Gaylord was there, also, beaming a genial delight at the fair-faced little heiress over his glass of purple port. Once Bess, leaning toward him, whispered softly, with her eyes on Sandy, "You have lost your clerk. Mr. Gaylord."

For the wild craving of the lad's heart was to be eased at last. Far-off, in sight of Italian sunsets, he was to begin life and fame in earnest, at his chosen calling. Out of Grandma Van's snuff-box sprang so many wonderful things, but the greatest of them all was that rare painter which it gave to the world.

Meanwhile, Bess went home to the grand shadows of Longford, a lovely woman, a great heiress, and better yet, a happy bride. More than all this, Madge Van Brun knew, at last, what had become of Grandma Van's lost diamonds.

A STARTLING CONFESSION.

BY WILLIAM T. WEXFORD.

THE name by which I shall introduce myself to the public is William T. Wexford, and I am a small retail dealer in dry goods and haberdashery, in the city of Boston. If, yesterday morning, I had been asked what probability there was of my becoming the hero of a mysterious and remarkable story, I should have said as much as of my inventing a sub-marine telegraph that would not break down, or a new kind of gunpowder that wouldn't blow up. What I mean to say is, that in the whole city of Boston there was not, yesterday morning, a more utterly prosaic, matter-of-fact and uninteresting person than myself, or one with less of a story to relate; but the last twenty-four hours have so changed the whole aspect of my life, that for the first time since I arrived at the years of discretion, I feel the desire to make a confidence, and to share the responsibility of a secret too weighty to be confined to one man's consciousness. Forty years of single life have, however, pretty well cured me of the youthful friendships with which I started on my career, and I should really find it hard to-day to put my hand on any man's shoulder and say, "We are friends." To be sure, there is Sneyd (Brown, Fogg and Sneyd), with whom I now and then smoke a cigar, or hurry through a lunch; and there is Jonas Badger, of whom I would as lief ask the time of day as any man on "change;" and little Tomlinson, who keeps next door to me. But there is not one of them who wouldn't stare if I were to say, "Sneyd, or Badger, or Tomlinson, I want to repose a confidence in you." And I am sure I should stare harder than ever they could, to catch myself in any such ridiculous position, and had rather, on the whole, go to the Common and whisper my secret to the leaves, as the party in history—I really forget her name—is said to have done.

No, I will tell what I have to tell to the public—the dear, generous, trusting public, who is always ready to listen to every man's story, and who cannot disappoint him by betraying his confidence, seeing that after himself there is no one to be told. Furthermore, what is every one's business is

nobody's business, and the public will not repay the trust I repose in it by offering advice for which I do not wish, or criticism which I can hardly pardon. To the public, then, I offer, with no further preamble, the following statement of facts:

It was nine o'clock in the evening of Monday, the 22d inst., and having just returned from the store to my house, I was putting on my slippers and dressing-gown previous to indulging in a quiet smoke before turning in, when I heard the doorbell ring, and presently the steps of some one coming through the passage.

It may be proper here to state that I live in a small house bequeathed me by my father, and that I usually let rather more than half of it to some quiet family. Just now, however, I have no tenants, and there is consequently no one in the house but myself and Katy Brien, the old woman who waits upon me, as she did upon my father and mother before me.

"Tomlinson, I suppose," thought I, rather discontentedly, as I looked into my tobacco-box and found it nearly empty; for Tomlinson is a man who likes smoking better than he does buying tobacco.

But as Katy threw open the door, I saw that my visitor was neither Tomlinson nor any party of his cut; being, in fact, a very pretty young woman, looking much fluttered and a little frightened, as she came slowly into the room.

"Mr. Wexford, I believe," said the pretty young woman, blushing very much.

"That's my name, ma'am," said I, shutting the tobacco-box, and pushing a chair towards her. "Wont you be seated?"

She thanked me and took the chair, but did not know what to say next. So I went and shut the door after Katy, who would have liked to listen outside it, if it had not suggested her return to the kitchen, and then coming back, I took a seat myself, and said:

"Can I be of any service to you, my—" dear, I was going to say, but changed it to "madam."

The pretty young woman raised some very soft dark eyes to mine, and said, blushing more than ever:

"Yes sir; but it is so strange that I should ask you! My name is May Holland, and I work for Mrs. Mode the milliner."

I bowed, but did not say anything; for, in fact, what could I say, even if I had not been thinking what a very neat little foot was peeping from under Miss May Holland's dark alpaca dress? So she went on, still more timidly:

"I had a call from the chaplain of the prison this evening, and he told me that a man who is shut up there to be tried for burglary, sent me this, and he—I mean the chaplain—said I had better come and see you."

She held out a little trembling hand, with a bit of crumpled paper between the fingers. I took it, and as I accidentally touched the little hand, I noticed that it was as cold as ice. I did not say anything, however, but smoothing the paper upon my knee, read, in a very bad hand, these words:

"I am the one as has kept you going, so fur; but now I'm a goin' to die, and I want to give you to them as can do fur you, and give you your rights, inter the bargain. Go to a man by the name of Wexford, who lives No. 16 — street, and tell him to come with you to see me, to-morrow morning, and no later, or I'll be gone up. I can make both on you rich and happy. Mind you come, both on you."

"TOOLY WEDGER."

I read this all through twice, and then I looked up sharp at the young woman. It looked amazingly like a new kind of confidence game; but May Holland looked so little like it, that instead of telling her, as I had been going to, that she had better try somewhere else, I only said:

"This is a very strange transaction, Miss Holland."

"Very strange," echoed she, meeting my suspicious look with one so frank and fearless that I gave up, from that moment, any idea of imposition, so far, at least, as she was concerned.

"Do you know the party calling himself Tooly Wedger, at all?" asked I, after reading the note once more.

"No indeed, sir. I never heard of him until an hour ago," answered the girl, with a little indignation of manner.

"Excuse me. I did not suppose you did, but it is so very remarkable. I hardly know what to advise, or how to act," said

I, growing rather red and uncomfortable myself; for of course I did not wish to hurt the little thing's feelings, and was afraid I had.

"The chaplain said he hoped we would come," suggested May, diffidently.

"Did he? When did he say?" asked I, quickly.

"At nine to-morrow morning. He asked Mrs. Mode if I could go, and she said I could."

"At nine in the morning. That is broad day, at least."

"Yes sir," said the girl, looking as if she wondered what that had to do with it.

"And for whom were we to ask at the jail?"

"For the chaplain, sir. He said he would be there ready to see us."

"Very well, then," said I, making up my mind all of a sudden, "I will go. Say I meet you at the jail, at five minutes before nine to-morrow morning. Then I can, at least, talk to the chaplain, who is, no doubt, a respectable man, and decide upon my course afterwards."

"Yes sir. I will be there," said the girl, rising, and looking towards the door. But as she raised her eyes, I saw that they were full of tears, and I knew well enough that she had understood the doubt and suspicion of my tone, though I had hardly known it myself. So I held out my hand and said:

"I am much obliged to you for coming to me, Miss Holland. We will see the matter through, at all events."

"Thank you, sir," said the child. And just touching my hand, she hurried away, and let herself out at the front door before I overtook her.

I did not know before that when women want to cry the tears go into their voices, as well as their eyes, or that such a little change in the curve could alter a roguish smiling mouth into one that looked as if it had never seen a smile.

I did not sleep very much that night, but lay thinking—sometimes about Tooly Wedger's letter, and his promise to make "both on us rich and happy," and sometimes of May Holland's pretty face, and foot, and hand.

I was at the store next morning at eight o'clock, rather to the disgust of the clerks, who do not expect to buckle to it quite so early, although they have to be on hand; for I believe "it's the early bird that gets

the worm," and I've sold more than one dollar's worth by having my store ready, and my goods displayed, while my neighbors were all in the suds, as you may say.

So, having seen all things straight for the day, and told Simpkins to keep a bright lookout for customers, I took my hat and started. It is a good step from my place to the jail, but I reached the gate on time, and found May Holland waiting for me. She looked even prettier by day than by gaslight, and was even more trembling and blushing than she had been at our first interview. I spoke pleasantly to her, and shook hands; but I am free to own I was a little nervous myself. We rang the bell, and were shown into the office, and asked for the chaplain, who soon came to us, and while shaking hands with Miss Holland, said he had hoped we should come, for Wedger was very low, and seemed anxious to see us before it was too late.

Now that it had come to dealing with a man, I found myself cool enough; and some of my old suspicions returning, I began to ask the chaplain what might be the nature of Tooty Wedger's business with me, and what sort of character he was himself. The chaplain, however, cut me short.

"Tooty Wedger," said he, "is an English burglar, and a very hardened criminal. He is in jail awaiting his trial for breaking into a dwelling-house and nearly murdering the owner, who resisted him. But he is also a dying man, whose soul is burdened with some fearful crime, and he calls upon you two to give him such aid and comfort as one human being should find himself unable to refuse to another in his extremity. Will you see him?"

"O yes indeed, sir!" said my companion, softly, putting her little hands together, and raising her eyes to his.

The chaplain smiled a little, but turned to me.

"I will see him, if it is desirable," said I. And without another word, the chaplain led the way to one of the hospital cells, where lay a big black-browed fellow, gasping away his life in the last stages of some lung disease.

"Here are Miss Holland and Mr. Wexford, Wedger," said the chaplain, kindly. And then he pointed to some chairs for us, and went away.

The dying man just glanced at May, as if he had seen her before, and then he lay

staring at me, as if my cash-book was printed on my face, and he was making it up for the day.

"Never saw you before, mate," said he, at last.

"No, I suppose not. Why did you want to see me now?" asked I, glad of a chance to open the business and get it over.

"Single man, aint you?" asked the burglar.

"Yes."

"Good line of business, respectable, and all that?"

"I haven't any complaints to make," said I, cautiously.

"Well, if you'll marry that girl, I'll make a rich man of you," said Tooty Wedger, pointing his long finger at May, who colored up as red as fire, half got up, looked at me, and then covered her face with her hands, and turned away. As for me, I just looked at her like a fool, and said nothing.

"Like enough you're thinking I'm her father, and that I'm going to give you what I've made in the way of business, to take her off my hands," said Tooty Wedger, fuming I did not speak.

I started a little, but didn't speak, for that was just what I had been thinking.

"Well, it aint so," continued he. "She's neither kid nor kin of mine, and her fortune's as honestly come by as your own; but she can't get hold of it without your help; and anyway, she's safer married. Will you have her, mate?"

"I don't know as she'd have me," blurted I, feeling not over eighteen years old, and looking at May's back.

"She will. If she don't, you can keep the money yourself." And the burglar winked one of his eyes at me, and then smiled in a ghastly sort of way.

"No," said I, "we cannot either of us promise what you want; but what I will promise is, if I can help this young lady to regain what you say is honestly her own, be it much or little, I will do it, and ask for nothing but a 'Thank you' in return. Does that suit you, Miss Holland?"

The girl turned round, and put her hand in mine. "You are very kind, sir—very kind!" said she; and then she turned away again, as if she had been too forward, and was scared at herself.

Tooty Wedger smiled again.

"That'll all fix itself," said he. "Now

call the parson for a witness, and I'll make a clean breast of it."

I went for the chaplain, who was with another sick man not far off; and when Wedger had taken a little wine, to strengthen him a bit, he began. But as I cannot recollect just his words, I will tell the story in my own.

It seems that about thirteen years ago Tooly Wedger was operating under an assumed name, in England, his native country; but having made that little island rather too hot to hold him, he concluded to try his luck in the New World, and took passage for Boston upon one of the English steamers. Among the passengers was an old German Jew, with his little granddaughter, who, for some mysterious reason, took a violent fancy to Wedger, and constantly appealed to him for advice and instruction in the customs and language of his future home. Tooly, at first indifferent, became gradually interested in his new friend, and especially in the little girl, who shared her grandfather's fancy for the good-looking young villain. The amount of it was, that, on landing in Boston, old Kautz employed Wedger to hire a house for him, and then insisted upon his making it a home for as long a period as he would consent to remain. This house was the very one afterwards purchased by my father, and now my property; and as Tooly Wedger mentioned this fact, a sudden light and a horrible suspicion flashed into my mind.

The sick man saw the sudden change upon my face, and said, hoarsely:

"You see what's a coming, matey. But hold on a while. Maybe it aint so bad as you think."

I looked at May, fearful of the shock his next words might inflict upon her; but her face still remained hidden, and she did not speak. I signed to the burglar to continue, and in a lower and more hesitating voice he went on to tell how he had lived for some weeks with the old German and the pretty little Gertrude, until, during the sudden illness of the former, he had confided to Wedger, whom he regarded as a devoted and reliable friend, that he had brought with him from Holland jewels and gold to an immense amount, the fruit of a long life of usury, and a parsimony so unreasonable and blind that, in making his journey, he had chosen to retain his fortune in its present form, instead of procur-

ing bills of exchange, that he might have it constantly under his own eye, and within reach of his own hand. He furthermore confided to Wedger that, on first hiring the house where they then lived, he had buried a box containing the bulk of his treasure, in the cellar, at a designated point, meaning to keep it there until he could satisfy himself with a safe and profitable investment. Now, however, fearing that he was about to die, he wished to confide to his young friend the guardianship not only of the fortune, but of the little girl whose inheritance it was to be; and she would be left by her grandfather's death entirely alone in a strange country.

Tooly Wedger promised all that was required of him, and kept his promise by rising in the middle of the night and stealing down to the cellar, with intent to dig up the old man's treasure and escape with it, leaving him to his fate. But either the miser's quick ears had discovered the movement, or his suspicions had been otherwise aroused. At all events, the burglar had not yet reached the box, when a bony arm was thrown about his neck, and he found himself dragged backward from the pit he had dug, while the old man's white face bent over him, with a murderous gleam in the eyes, and a naked knife menacing his heart.

"It isn't pleasant, matey," said Tooly Wedger, pausing to wipe his forehead and take another sip of his cordial. "And when it's settle or be settled, it aint many chaps in my line as 'ud hesitate. I hadn't no hard feeling to the old man. He'd done well by me, and the little girl was nigher to me than anything else that ever I knowed; but when that cold steel p'int come a crowding up agin my windpipe, I sort o' got onreasonable, and when I come to, I'd got the handle inter my own hand, and I was jabbing the blade right inter his heart. Leastways, inter some of his vitals; for he fell right down at my feet, all in a lump, right into the hole I'd been digging, to look for that box, sort of quivered all over, and laid still. I stood a minute looking at him and trying to think, but I couldn't think. I was sort o' daunted, for I hadn't meant to do it—I didn't want to do it, and it struck me all aback to see him one minute alive and full of strength as ever he'd been, and tussling there with me, and the next, lying at my feet, a lump of carrion. It struck all

over me, as I never had anything before nor since; and without putting a hand to him, or thinking anything more about the box, I got hold of the shovel, and piled the earth in again, as fast as I could move it, covering up money, and man, and bloody knife, all together. I worked like mad, and I worked well, too; for the devil kept whispering at my elbow, 'He'll be found, and he'll hang you yet.' But I got him covered up so well, and spread the rest of the earth round so complete, that it would have been hard to tell where the hole had been dug, or that ever there was any hole at all. Then I crept up stairs as quiet as if I'd been like to wake him up by stepping too heavy, and so I got to bed, and lay shaking with my head under the blankets. By morning I was all right again, and when the woman that waited upon us every day came, I told her that the old man and I were going into the country for a while, and shouldn't want her any more. Then I got a broker, and sold what little furniture there was in the house, took the child to a woman I knew, and told her to keep her for a few days, locked the house and put the key in my pocket, and went to Texas."

"To Texas!" said I, as Tooty Wedger paused, and the chaplain held the cordial to his white lips.

"Yes. Never mind putting in the fine work. Time is near up, and next round with that cough, they'll have to toss up the sponge for Tooty. When I'd got some money, I sent and took Gerty out of the poorhouse, and put her to a milliner. I named her May, because that was the month I first saw her in, and Holland, because that was where she come from. I came back here six weeks ago, found out about you, and had a notion of breaking into your house, and seeing if I'd got over my scare of the old man; but before I had the chance, I got into trouble, and here I am. The place is six foot in front of the chimney, and ten from the front wall of the house. Marry the girl, or I'll haunt you! Time's up, parson! Give us a knee."

He went off into a terrible fit of cough-

ing, the chaplain holding him in his arms, and motioning us to leave the room. We waited a while in the corridor, and when he could leave, he hurried out to say that the sick man was suddenly worse, and would not probably be able to speak to us again. So we went away, and in crossing the Common, I said to May:

"There's no knowing how the story of the money will turn out; but Tooty Wedger gave as good advice as a better man, when he told me to ask you to be my wife. What do you say, May Holland?"

She didn't seem able to say much of anything; but I got leave to come and see her in the evening, and left her at the door of Mrs. Mode's rooms, looking prettier and more fluttered than ever.

I went home, and went down in my cellar with a foot rule and a spade, having first sent Katy Brien on a long errand. The second spadeful of dirt turned me sick and faint, for it had the bones of a skeleton hand in it; but I kept on, with the strange feeling of a man working in a dream, and unearthed the whole of it—the poor disjointed thing that had been a man, and was now not even the skeleton of one, but only a mass of crumbling bones. Then I dug a little deeper, and came to a square iron box. It was locked, but the pickaxe soon brought the cover off, and I saw—

No, it sounds too much like a novel. How can I, a sober retail dealer, going on in my forty-second year, tell such a story, and expect to be credited? And to lose my credit, would be to me like losing my life. All I will say is, that Tooty Wedger's story was no more extraordinary than it was true, and that a good many queerer things are happening in everyday life than you can find even in Miss Braddon's stories.

About May? Well, it is only a few days, yet, since I first saw her; but quite between ourselves, dear public, I will say that if you keep your eyes open for a marriage announcement, where the names of William T. Wexford and May Holland shall be conspicuous, you will be gratified before you are a great many weeks older.

▲ WILLOW ROCKING-CHAIR.

BY ALICE.

At last, the fact was decided in my mind that I wanted and must have a willow rocking-chair. This was done without difficulty, but how I should obtain it was what troubled me most. I thought, and studied, and wondered, and all to no purpose. My father is a farmer, and, as a matter of course, his money was hardly earned, and, also, closely held. I was the youngest of four girls, and my chance for purchases came last, when it came at all, which was seldom.

From the time when mother rocked me to sleep in the old-fashioned chair, it had been my wish, amounting almost to a passion, to possess one of my own. I thought, in the spring when it came time for a new edition of clothes, I would economize in some manner, enough to purchase a rocker; but, to my dismay, one of my sisters came home from the city with a lovely new silk for herself, saying it was not so particular about my clothes, for I would stay at home, and could make over her last summer's grenade, which became me in color better than it did her. She was going with Aunt Kate to Mount Joy to spend a few weeks, and, as she was very stylish, of course her niece must not look shabby.

It was out of the question after that for me to think of anything more than a ribbon or two, and a fresh flower for my home-made lace hat. I began again to study rocking-chair.

I tried a garden bed, but the season was so dry nothing grew well, and so I had my labor for my pains, and back-ache for good measure. Then I persuaded mother to give me permission to sell the extra eggs and keep the money. Out of the first ten dozen that went to market, four dozen were broken, leaving just a dollar and fifty cents toward my treasure.

Some cousins came from the city to spend the warm weather at our house, and they were so very fond of boiled eggs—and they “were perfectly fresh and excellent,” and so on—that, with what it took for cake and other necessities, there were none left for poor me.

We had a great deal of company, and my sisters went out very often. Benton Village

was only a half mile from our house, and there were a great many New York city people who spent their summer there among the mountains.

I always had to help mother, because I was young, and had plenty of time before me for pleasure; this was my sisters' view of the matter, and I had to submit, though I will add, not at all times with a very good grace.

There was one young gentleman whom I thought more of than of the others, Arthur Williams. He and I often had long talks together when my work was done, and the other young people were out sailing or riding.

In the fall an uncle of his came from the West, and took Arthur home with him, and I was left again to myself, and the chair that should be all my own, one day.

The winter following I attended school at the Benton Academy. I studied very hard, as it was to be my last opportunity at school, and learned much that was new to me.

I had one sister who was an authoress, and so I thought I would try my hand in that direction for a little spending money. After much writing, erasing and rewriting, I made a very fair manuscript, and sent it to a publisher. No return. I waited some time, and then ventured an inquiry in regard to it. They knew nothing about it. And all this time, in imagination, I had been rocking in my chair.

After a while I thought I would try some other publisher, but, alas! my writing was not in “their style!” Sadly I laid aside my pen, saying, “Your ways are not my ways,” and so for the present I sit in a borrowed chair, hoping some fairy will come and tell me what to do and how to do it.

Looking over remains of younger days, I found among my papers this scrap, and smiled as I thought of my petty trials. Many changes have come to us since I wrote those lines. For many a weary month I lay helpless on my bed, and saw one by one our home circle removed: my sisters to homes of their own, and father and mother went the long, long journey to the home from

which they'll never come back to us save in dreams, and thoughts of the dear old home. When I was again able to go out in the world, I saw so many changes that I felt very much older; and here and there I found a gray hair in my braids, that proved the thought a truth.

One autumn day I went out to gather leaves, and, as I was returning to the home where I always felt lonely, I thought how nearly my life had been like the leaves, and like them I had grown old so early; and, thinking still, I sat down and wept. I was roused by a voice beside me, and felt a hand laid on my head.

I could scarcely believe my eyes, or trust my voice to speak, it seemed so like a vision that my one childhood lover had come to

claim me, but true it was. He told me I was to him like the autumn leaves, all the fairer for ripening, and the years had left only softening traces in my face. Long we sat there and talked, till the sun went down, far down the west.

I wept no more bitter tears, but tears of joy; and, as I put the bright leaves in my room, I looked in the mirror and saw the berries Arthur had put in my hair, I thought, "Not so faded as I thought I was, after all!"

We are very happy in our home, and my every wish is gratified, so far as wealth and human love can bestow. Many rare works of art deck my rooms, but among them I treasure most of all a vase of autumn leaves and "A WILLOW ROCKING-CHAIR."

A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

A TALE OF HOME LIFE

BY THRO. GIFT.

CHAPTER V.

DICK'S DIFFICULTIES.

A CONCLAVE was sitting in the dining-room of No. 15, Gresham Square, the terrible "Council of Three" revived, only consisting of the unterrifying elements of Lady Margaret, Dick and Bernard Clive. Breakfast over, which was a family meal, this trio had remained below after the dispersion of the rest; and George, racing in there about eleven to refresh his brain as to the separate quotients of nine times thirteen and thirteen times nine, had been expelled with a promptitude which sent him in a scarlet and injured condition to his studies, remarking indignantly that mamma was crying, and Dick in such a temper as never was. "Why ever didn't he stay away, instead of coming home to make everything disagreeable, and push a fellow out by the shoulders directly he put his nose into a room?"

"I think it is a pity you are not both away," said Eve, in her quiet little voice. "There is never any peace or rest where there are boys—is there, Miss Smith? Madge, that is the ninth time you have struck the wrong note in that bar."

"I can't help it; my finger *will* slip," said Madge, almost tearfully.

"I think if you tried you could help it, my dear," said patient Miss Smith, resignedly; and then Kate's voice was heard in gay exclamation as she opened the dining-room door.

"Dick wont push her out," said George.

Kate was quite unaware of the existence of conclaves, tears or disputes. After breakfast she had run up stairs, as usual, to perform the young-lady-like duties which fell to her share as eldest daughter—the flowers to be watered and rearranged in conservatory and drawing-room; the canary to be fed; an evening dress to be examined and handed over for repairs to the maid, who divided her services between Lady Margaret and the two elder girls; and a couple of notes to be written, one of which required a great deal of pen-nibbling and meditation,

with the pretty head very much on one side, and the pretty fingers rumpling the bronze locks in a terrible fashion.

"Horrid thing!" muttered Kate, with her forehead drawn into a very Mother Bunch of wrinkles, and stabbing her pen viciously through a mistake. "I wish we lived in America, where you can always call on, or invite, the one member of a family that you want to see, and the others never dream of being offended. I tell you what it is" (there was no one to tell it to but Twitters the canary, and Tidlums the Persian kitten, but that didn't matter), "there is something very wrong in society in this country, and I wish some one would alter it. I've a good mind to write to the Times. As if one wanted all those Bickersteth girls!"

Kate was still rumpling her locks, and wishing that a letter to the Times might have remedied this second error as well, when a message came to her that it was time to dress for her ride; and finishing in hot haste the letter over which she had been puzzling-so long, she dashed up stairs to dress; then remembering of a sudden the delightful fact of Dick's presence down stairs, hurriedly buttoned her riding-habit, and ran down to secure his services as cavalier in the park, instead of those of her usual attendant.

"And upon my word, never stirred since breakfast! You three idle—Why, what's the matter?"

She had burst into the room bright and smiling, with a host of saucy dimples playing about her rosy cheeks; but she broke off sharply, for Lady Margaret, her cap more awry than usual, was leaning back in the big leathern armchair, with her handkerchief to her eyes; Dick, flushed and angry-looking, with his legs crossed and his chair tilted back, was talking in sharp petulant tones; and Mr. Clive, looking up from a pile of papers before which he was seated, appeared to be remonstrating with his usual half-lazy sarcasm.

Outside, above the brown wire blinds, a thousand little silvery buds, tipped with

green, peeped hardly out on every twig and bough of the bare spidery brown branches of elm and hawthorn in the square, against a background of pale blue sky, heaped up with ragged snow-white clouds. Bells were ringing in the distance; a man crying "Chickweed!" at the corner; and above and over all the pale February sunshine was streaming cheerily, lighting up the dark oak-colored walls of the small dining-room, and bringing out all the cracks in the paint, and all the dinginess in the frames of the venerable paintings, which looked down in the dignity of faded oils and family pomp upon the modern group beneath. Sunlight is a terrible foe to age, and dust, and tarnish. It shines out very beneficially on a bright pretty face, framed in waving hair, and a ripe young figure trimly buttoned up in a dark blue habit; but it points rebukingly to the lines of temper and dissipation, laughs ill-naturedly at timeworn carpets and faded mahogany, and is generally disagreeably officious in showing up things not meant to be seen.

"What is the matter?" said Kate, seeing that no one answered her. "Mother, has any one been worrying you?" And then she went and put her warm soft arm round Lady Margaret's shoulder, and glared indignantly at Clive. There was no one else to glare at—except Dick; and Kate's eyes could not have glared at him.

Said Dick, snappishly, "Nonsense, Kitty! We are only talking business; but my mother always makes a fuss. There! be off. There's no need for you to worry about it."

"A fuss!" sobbed Lady Margaret, looking indignantly over her handkerchief. "How can you be so—so cruel, Dick? But you will kill me some day. It is dreadful. Is it not dreadful, Mr. Clive? Five hundred pounds more than his allowance gone in nine months; and then this—this wicked—"

"Need we enter upon it before Miss Bellew?" said Clive, gently. "Perhaps, as Dick suggests, it is not necessary she should be troubled about such matters."

"Troubled!" repeated Kate, haughtily. "Everything that troubles my mother and Dick troubles me, Mr. Clive; he has no secrets from me, not *any*" (with emphasis), "and certainly what a stranger can discuss I may hear."

"I beg your pardon most humbly," said Clive, veiling irony, which Kate felt in

every nerve, beneath profound politeness. "I was foolish enough to imagine that your brother did not initiate you into all his private affairs, and equally foolish in fancying that you would not desire to enter into them in public. I had forgotten, however, how much advanced in these subjects young ladies have grown of late. Pray forgive my interference."

"Don't be a goose, Kate," put in Dick, ungraciously. "You don't know what you are talking about."

"My dear Kate," said Lady Margaret, remonstrating, "Mr. Clive is quite right. This is not a subject for you or—or any one" (with a reproachful glance at her son); "only as the consequences of this unhappy boy's errors always fall on me; I am obliged to hear of them."

Poor Kate! every one had given her a rap; and it was her own fault. Instinctively the young lady decided that between her and Bernard Clive must be war to the knife; and while still horribly painfully crimson in every visible inch of her fair skin, she answered, with a brave attempt at *sang-froid*:

"You spoke of money, mamma. Please don't cry in that way. Is Dick in debt again? Perhaps it is not so bad as it has been made to appear to you. Things often look worse at first. Don't vex mamma, Dick dear. Wait till we can talk it over quietly. Don't you see how upset she is? When we are by ourselves" (and Kate shot a Parthian glance at the intruder), "you can explain about it."

"Miss Bellew appears to be under the belief that things grow smaller by being kept," said Clive, with calm amusement—"a young lady's doctrine, comfortable, but—not reducible to fact, as she will perhaps find when she has acquired a few more years' experience. In the meantime" (looking at his watch), "as I have unfortunately an appointment at one, shall we go on with these papers, Lady Margaret? You are sure it does not tire you?"

"O no; it is so good of you to interest yourself—so wonderfully good and kind!" cried Lady Margaret, rubbing her nose vigorously, and smiling gratefully on her visitor. "I'm sure I don't know what I should do without you to-day. Who is that?"

"Miss Bellew's 'orse," said Buttons, opening the door, and putting in a round bullet-head, all agog with curiosity. Of

course the basement story were fully acquainted with the fact of conclave, tears and troubles, long ago. "Waitin' at the door, please, m'm; and please, m'm, is Myson to go 'isself, or lengthen the stirrupses for Mister Dick?"

"Of course there is no hope of you," said Kate, turning sorrowfully to Dick. "O, why is it so fine? Uncle Lovegoats will be sure to be out, or something, and know if I stay at home. I hate going now; and, O! I had so looked forward to having you."

"I really think we could go over these without you, Dick, if you want to ride with your sister," Clive observed, with a gracious affability, for which Kate could have boxed his ears. "It is a pity she should be disappointed, and I think I can understand these perfectly by myself, and can perhaps explain them better to your mother."

"Of course, *that* is out of the question," began Kate, magnanimously, anxious to cut off her nose to spite her face; but Dick interrupted her.

"Can you really, old fellow? Then I'll take myself off for an hour. It is impossible to do business quietly when people make such a fuss. My head is spinning like a mill-wheel, as it is."

"I am sure, my dear boy—" began Lady Margaret, pleadingly; but Dick was already out of the room, and in another five minutes he and Kate were slowly trotting in the direction of the park.

"Now, Dick, what is the matter—what has put you out so much, and upset mamma? Tell me," said Kate.

"Put me out! I don't know what you mean. My mother may be put out, if you like. I am not."

The tone was a sufficient barometer. It pointed full to "stormy;" and Kate, like an astute mariner (Ah me! how weather-wise women at home get in such matters), took in sail and tacked to leeward on the instant.

"Why don't you live within your income, sir?—and how much is it for, this time?"

Kate thought she had put the question now very lightly and pleasantly; and she stretched out her hand to give a pleasant little pat to the neck of Dick's steed at the same time. Still the young man's brow lowered ominously, and his voice was peevish, if not angry.

"How much! I'm sure I don't know. Clive has been seeing about it, and adding the bills together. I don't know how they mount up. They will do it; and as to living within one's income—if you were not a baby, you'd know it was a simple impossibility. Just try it for yourself some day, that's all."

"But, Dick dear, two hundred and twenty pounds a—"

"Two hundred and twenty fiddlesticks! Why, it's a mere flea-bite; just enough for men to expect you to live like a gentleman instead of a pauper, and not enough to do it upon. Why, how much do you think wine alone comes to?"

"I suppose it depends on how much you drink," said Kate, doubtfully. "Mamma and I get through rather more than two bottles a week when we are quite alone."

"Two bottles! But that shows the absurdity of women trying to regulate men's expenses. Why, every fellow that comes to supper with you expects to drink a bottle to himself; and there are cigars, and horses, and—"

"But how do poor men manage, Dick?—poor clergymen's sons, who haven't got the money for these things, and can't get it?"

"Manage! They don't manage. No one ever could."

"But what do they do then?"

"Run into debt, or lick other men's plates, or starve. Don't ask such absurd questions, Kate."

Barometer again falling! Kate held her peace, and looked away to where the Serpentine was sparkling between the leafless trees like a line of silver light. There had been a gentle rain in the morning, which had left the grass dewed over by myriads of tiny diamonds, and made the loose brown earth of the ride smell fresh and sweet as a newly-plowed field. The sun was shining brightly on all the gilding and glitter of the Albert Memorial; but Kate's eyes were dazzled with something besides sunshine, and her heart was very heavy. If Dick—poor Dick!—would not do justice to himself, how could she expect the world to do it for him?

"Kittie," said Dick, abruptly, "you'll talk over my lady, wont you? I can't really go through another of these scenes; and you can always get your way, you know. Eh? will you?"

"But what about, dear?"

"About! Why, about the money, of course. Say four hundred pounds, or even five hundred; a fellow must have it if he's to go back to Oxford at all, and it's just as well given sooner as later. I'll make any amount of promises to hold in for the rest of the time. You tell her so—eh?"

"But you have promised so often, Dick dear—and then" (hurriedly, lest her hero should be displeased) "mother may not have it to give. Dick, I am almost sure she has not."

"Can't she sell out something?"

"Dick, I didn't mean to tell you, but the lawyer was very angry with her for selling out last time for you. They said it was not fair to the other boys. You know that though everything was left to her, it was only for life, and—"

Dick interrupted her by an impatient exclamation, and a cut at his horse's flanks, which made the injured animal jump and bound from side to side in a manner rather unpleasant to Kate, whose own steed was spirited and easily frightened.

"What possessed my father to make such a will?" he cried, indignantly. "It is a shameful injustice. Just to think of a fellow of my age utterly dependent on his mother—obliged to go to her for every sixpence, and screwed, and cramped, and lectured like a baby! Kate, it's unbearable; can't you see it is?"

Dick's blue eyes grew quite moist at the picture of his own wrongs, while Kate's throat swelled sympathetically. Verily and indeed, love is blind. This young lady, so keen for the weaknesses and absurdities of the world in general, would have given anything for a cool thousand or so, to indulge her darling in his. Up in her mind rose a sudden remembrance of a certain eight hundred pounds left to her by an aunt some years back, and which would be her own when she was twenty-one—in two years' time; and Dick wondered, half angrily, why the smiles and color rushed so brightly to her face, till she turned to him, her eyes shining gladly.

"Why, Dick, there is Aunt Della's money. That would more than set you up—the money she left me."

"You silly child! and do you think I'd rob you? Besides, it isn't yours to give—till you're of age."

"I know that; but, Dick, people lend money on security; and that would be se-

curity, wouldn't it? Now please don't laugh at me. I'm sure it would."

"My dearest Kittle, you're a good little girl—the best lot in the family; but even if any one were willing to lend me money on such security, I couldn't agree; all the family would make such a howl, and say I was swindling you."

"That is nonsense, dear. As if you wouldn't give me anything you have if I wanted it! Besides, no one need ever know. I will write whatever you like, and then when I am twenty-one—"

"It wouldn't be legal, Kittle. Not a Jew of the lot would look at your signature."

"Don't go to Jews, then. Ask your friends. Some of them would surely give you their signature, and trust to mine for repayment."

"Humph! it's all very well as far as you are concerned, little woman; but suppose you were to marry, what would your husband say?"

"My husband shall say that everything I do is right because I do it, or I will have none of him."

"Well, I don't like the idea, though of course I should pay it you all back, with interest. I should only accept it as a loan" (this very grandly); "but if nothing else turns up, I don't know what to do. I'll ask Clive."

"O Dick, don't! Why him?"

"My dear Kittle, what on earth makes you dislike Clive? He's the best fellow living, and I'm sure I don't know what I should do without him, especially now. I give you my word, Kate, I'm half mad with worry and trouble."

"Worse than the money?" asked Kate, aghast.

"A million times worse. I declare sometimes I wish she were at the bottom of the sea; and yet when I see her, she's so pretty and coaxing, I get more entangled than ever!"

"She!" said Kate, reddening again.

"Who are you speaking of?"

[N.B.—Grammar is not always the strong point of our well-educated Englishwomen.]

"No one you need prim up your mouth at, my child. A girl as respectable, as far as character goes, as yourself, every whit; but who has unfortunately taken a fancy to your humble servant."

"I don't understand you, Dick," said

Kate, still speaking very coldly. For the first time her brother's tone grated on the young lady's ear. "How do you know she likes you?"

"She says so, Kittle."

"Then you must have told her you liked her first. Women never take the initiative in these things."

"Perhaps I did. When girls are bewitchingly pretty, men are apt to make fools of themselves."

"But why fools? Dick" (a little impatiently), "do speak plainly. Do you mean that you are engaged, or—don't go on in that way."

"Can you keep a secret, Kittle?"

"Of course I can, if it will help you."

"Well, then, the fact is I've gone and tumbled into an offer of marriage; and goodness only knows if I shan't be in for a breach of promise case when I try to back out."

"Back out!" cried Kate, pale with bewilderment. "Break your word, do you mean? but how—why should you?"

"Why! Because I couldn't marry her even if I wished it, which I'm not quite such a fool as to do—not when I'm away from her, at any rate. Kate, don't stare at me in that codfish fashion. It would be utter ruin—annihilation—to a man far beneath me. Do you know what she is?"

"Tell me," said Kate, paler still; but Dick had no time. They were just wheeling round into the Row again; and riding directly up to them was a red-faced old gentleman, who uttered Dick's name in tones of great surprise and wrath. It was Lord Lovegoats.

CHAPTER VI.

A PROUD WOMAN.

WHEN Bernard Clive asked that question of the lodger at Mrs. Spinks's, which we have recorded in the last chapter but one, the expression on his face denoted a want of admiration for the charms of No. 2, Alma Terrace, which would assuredly have offended the proprietress of that dwelling, and which even brought a glow of color into the pale face of the woman he was addressing. "What! leave us for this hole!" said the elevated lines on the lawyer's forehead; and Mrs Grey, taking her hands out of his grasp answered very quietly:

"I left Woodleigh because circumstances

gave me no alternative, Mr. Clive; and I came here, first, because the poverty of the place suited my means; and next, because I wished to be out of the reach of acquaintances and society which I had no longer the power or desire to keep up."

She spoke with great dignity. Tall and strong as was Bernard Clive, this large fair woman, with the regal figure and noble brow, was an equal match for him—a far better match than poor little impulsive Kate Bellew.

"I have offended you," he said, quickly. "Forgive me, and tell me how—by coming here, or by what I said?"

"By neither; nor have you offended me. I never take offence where it is not meant; and I am sure you would not mean it."

"Thank you. You do me justice in that."

"But I should like to know how you found me out."

"In the simplest manner possible. I saw you come out of the governess's agency, in Harley Street, and—"

"It was you then?"

"On the other side of the way? Yes, and you eluded me skillfully, but I went—"

"Forgive my interrupting you again, Mr. Clive, but, seeing that I eluded you—as you say—was it right to follow me and find out what you saw I wished to keep secret?"

Again he felt the rebuke, mildly as it was given. This quiet graceful woman, with the grand blue eyes and gentle voice, had of a certainty the art of making herself minded.

"I do not know that it was right," he answered, dushing; "but you must allow that it was as natural to follow and seek out a friend for whom one cares very much and truly, as it seemed unnatural for that friend to first desert a home where all valued, and then avoid a friend who had never offended her."

He meant to rebuke this time; but she hardly seemed to heed, and only asked:

"Then they gave you my address at the institution? Yet how could they when—"

"When they only knew where your letters were to be addressed? Mrs. Grey, it is as plain that you are not a lawyer as that I am. Do you think that was not clue enough? After finding out the pastrycook mentioned, to find out the hours at which A. Z. usually called for her letters was simple enough, and merely entailed a few fibs and a mild attack of indigestion."

She smiled—very little, but it was for the

first time, and he was glad to see it—as she asked:

“How?”

“By the amount of leathery buns and rancid pastry which had to be consumed while extracting the desired information. It is fortunate I have a good constitution.”

“I could almost wish you had not, Bernard,” she said, smiling still, though sadly. “Do not go on. You have played the detective, and succeeded—to what end?”

“To this, that never having given you cause to distrust me,”—and he laid emphasis on the pronoun—“I can ask you to trust me now, and allow me to assist you as a friend may. I am a lazy fellow, Mrs. Grey; laziness agrees with me; but I can be active sometimes if I try very hard. Witness my exertions in the last twenty-four hours!”

“Have you told them—at Woodleigh—about finding me?” she asked.

“No,” he said, gravely; “I may have a thirst for information on my own account, but I shouldn’t dream of sharing it without your permission. When I was a little boy I always went into a corner and ate my cake all by my own self. I didn’t call all the others round and divide it among them, like good little Tommy in the story-book.”

The grave fair face looked up at him, laughing now.

“Yes,” she said, “I know you!”

“Do you? I almost feared you did not.”

“I know you guessed the reason of my leaving Woodleigh so abruptly.”

“I think I did. Shall I tell you my guess?”

“No,” she said, decisively.

“As you like. Is that reason—supposing that I guess it—impossible to get over?”

“Quite impossible,” Bernard, do not speak of it any more. Believe me, *this*—” and she laid her hand with a simple but touching gesture on the streamers of her widow’s-cap, which had fallen on her bosom—“is not an empty mockery with me.”

“Is it that you despise the new love or—”

“Despise! O no,” she interrupted, “but I pity it because it is given to one who has no capacity for loving left.”

“Then you mean that nothing would induce you to marry again?”

“That is what I mean—yes.”

“And you are so sure of this that you even fly from the offer of love, however hearty and reverent?”

“Yes,” she said, steadily, “and further than I have done if necessary.”

“Mrs. Grey,” said Clive as steadily, and with a keen quick glance, “if you had been as sure as you think, you would have stayed still. Flight is a confession of weakness, not strength.”

He had meant to confound her, but he was mistaken.

She met his glance with the patient smile of sad experience, and answered:

“In most cases—yes. Not in this.”

“Do you know,” he said, bending forward and speaking with a touching appealingness, very different to his usual half-languid half-sarcastic manner, “the sort of love you are rejecting?—how passionate it is, how humble, and how little would content it?—even friendship—friendship and a little of that kindness which you know so well how to show.”

The sad blue eyes filled suddenly, and she put out her hand to stop him.

“Pray, pray be silent, Bernard. You do no good, and are only paining me cruelly.”

“Do you think of the cruel pain you have given, and not to one only?”

“I do—indeed I do; but it is unavoidable. Should I have acted as I have done, if I had not?”

He was silent.

“It would have broken my heart, if that had not been done long ago,” she went on sorrowfully.

Still he did not answer, and his eyes were fixed on the ground.

“Bernard,” she said, in her former tone of grave kindly dignity, “let us leave this subject now and forever. I have gone through much trouble, and am preparing to go through more. I have left a happy and peaceful resting-place, and contented myself with this”—looking round the cheerless little room—“to escape that one thing. Do not bring it on me again. Remember, you have come to me this time against my will. If you would come again with it, it must be on my own terms, and with the strict understanding that unless they are complied with our intercourse must be brought to an end.”

There was no mistaking the decision of the tone. Bernard Clive, experienced in women and their ways as a lawyer and a man of the world can hardly fail to be, felt that this one was in earnest, and that if he would retain her friendship and aid her by his, it must be by complying with the rules

she had laid down. In two moments' thought he had weighed the *pros* and *cons*; in two more he decided for the former.

"If that is really your wish I must obey it; but if I do, you will on your side promise to treat and trust me as a real friend, a brother if you will?"

"A friend most certainly. I am afraid I do not hold with self-made brothers for women in my position. You don't mind my saying so?"

"On the contrary, I respect you for it. You are more sensible than I; though you needn't be afraid. Having given my word I shall keep it, both in the letter and spirit. Is the bargain made?"

For all reply she gave him her hand—not a very small one, but purely white and perfectly shaped as though cut out of alabaster by the hand of a Phidias. He held it in his a moment, but only a moment. He had sense enough to have learnt her character by heart; and the friendly clasp seemed to have given her comfort, for glancing with a smile at the neglected tea-things, she said:

"And now let me ring for some hot tea for you. This must have all got cold while we have been talking."

"Have you not had your own?"

"No, I did not care for it then. I do now."

"Then by all means let us have it. It will seem homelike to see you pouring out tea again."

And Mrs. Spinks, after having very unwillingly answered the bell, replenished the teapot, and left the room with an indignant bounce.

Another half-hour, of quiet, rather sad conversation, questions and answers on both sides; and Clive rose to go, incited so to do by his hostess looking at her watch, and saying, with a frank simplicity which disarmed offence:

"Bernard, I must turn you out. The good people here go to bed very early, and as I am not in the habit of receiving visitors, we must not shock their propriety."

"You are the most discreet matron I ever saw," he said smiling as he got up, and then wondered to see the rush of violent painful crimson which covered her face; "and when may I see you again?"

"Any day next week."

"This is only Wednesday! Well"—with a shrug of his shoulders—"if sooner may not be, I will call on Sunday."

"Sunday afternoon then; I go to church morning and evening."

His eyes twinkled as he saw that she would not have him in the evenings; but he only said:

"And you are bent on carrying out your resolutions? How I wish I could dissuade you! Fancy *you* companion to some vicious old woman!"

"Old women are not necessarily vicious; and even if my one were, I might do her some good. Viciousness sometimes comes from unsoftened trouble; but troubles sympathized with must soften by degrees. Yes, I am quite resolved, Bernard; and remember, you have promised to let me know if you hear of anything. Do not mind if it sounds humble. I have no pride of *that* sort."

"I promise," he said, and then he took her hand again and went away, nearly tumbling over Mrs. Spinks, who happened to be brushing some crumbs off the oilcloth just outside the parlor door. Mrs. Grey did not cry again when she was left alone. She was not a woman given to crying in general. Deep grief seldom finds vent in lamentations, and Mrs. Grey had known grief heavier than most women. You could not look at her, and her face was as calm and unruffled as that of a marble statue—you could not see her pass, and her step was firmer and more upright than many girls'—without feeling, there goes one who has in very truth walked barefoot over the red-hot plowshares of pain, and borne away the wounds deep-scored into her woman's flesh. She never spoke of her chief troubles. They yet bled too freshly to bear uncovering even to a kindly eye; and had it been otherwise, hers was not a nature which could find solace in speech; but those that knew her intimately (they were not more than two or three) knew that simultaneously with the loss of her husband had come other trials, greater almost in one sense; trials that had driven her from home and friends, and obliged her to struggle, poor and unaided, with a churlish world. Not as churlish perhaps to her as to others. There are people who meet courtesy and kindness wherever they go, without ever appearing to claim it; or seeming aware that they are treated other than the rest of the world. Mrs. Grey was one of them. There was something in the unruffled dignity of her look and manner which inspired respect—something in the beautiful

womanliness of her face and appearance which won her love and confidence; and the world gave her both. A noble woman in many things, with a large sweet nature, wonderfully guileless and placid; with a wide benevolence and an unflurried gentleness and gravity, unspeakably refreshing to a tired mind, or an overworked body. Not a faultless woman by any means—else not womanly—but one who had marred her life by a great grave error, of which even now she was hardly conscious, so rooted was it in the nature to which she was born. Pride!

There are different sorts of pride—some common and easily distinguishable, some uncommon and very hard to find out. Mrs. Grey's was of the latter sort, and was rather a close mantle of reserve which folded round her whole being, and at the first breath of serious wrong in those she loved, bore her away, bleeding inwardly, but sternly and impenetrably silent, out of their reach, even for penitence or atonement, altogether and forever. Do not imagine that she was a touchy woman, or quick to take offence. She was not. Anger, indeed, in the ordinary sense of the word, was not in her nature; and when she witnessed it in another, she had a way of opening her calm blue eyes, with a look of grave surprise and distaste, very mortifying to the irascible one. She was slow in many things, especially slow to suspect evil in those about her; but, once that suspicion had been forced on her, she was equally slow to relinquish it, and still more so to believe others could think evil of her. Nay, when that other was one who *knew* her, whom she loved, or in whom she had confided, the cruelty and injustice smote on her silent heart a blow for which there was no healing. She could not defend herself; she was too proud. She could not even stoop to seek an explanation; and so there was nothing for her but to put the sinner away, and go from him, broken-hearted perhaps, but rigidly silent, unrebuking but unexcusing, saying, "I forgive you;" and finding, as Rochefoucauld says, a charm in that word to condone a lifelong horror and avoidance.

This was a fault, and no light one; but it had brought on her such bitterness of punishment and sorrow as an angel might have wept to see and know incurable; for how cure a disease unless you be aware of it? and Mrs. Grey, whilst repenting herself humbly of many a lighter sin, was still in entire and childlike ignorance of this.

At present, having decided, of her own gentle discretion, that a large latitude must be made for the ignorance of social customs natural to the lower orders, and having, to avoid the very faintest breath of scandal, dismissed her old friend at the primitively early hour of half past eight, she never dreamt that the mischief she had affably gone out of her way to avoid was already done; and did not even awake to the consciousness that something was amiss with her landlady, till after two days' persistent surliness and inattention. Then indeed, with a kindly desire to find some excuse for the misconduct, she, instead of rebuking, cast about in her mind for a reason for it, and inquired whether Mr. Spinks was out of work; or whether they had received any bad news of the daughter who was in service.

"Out o' work, 'm?" said the landlady, irately, and resenting the blandly-spoken words; "no, but it's double work as he'll be 'avin' to do if I've to give up lettin' these rooms, as I expect I'll be druv to if things don't halter one o' these days. No, m'm, I aint 'ad no bad news o' my gurr, nor am like to without she goes to the bad, as is a wonder more gurr's doesn't, with their misuses a-settin' of 'em sich examples."

"Mrs. Spinks," said the widow mildly (she was getting tired), "I am sorry your daughter's mistress is not a nice person. You should try and find the girl another. Shut the door behind you when you go out, if you please; you left it open last time."

And Mrs. Spinks went out, and shut the door, actually silenced; and joined Spinks, who sat mildly smoking and remonstrating in the chimney-corner.

"You mark my word for it, 'ell be comin' to-night agin," said Mrs. Spinks, energetically.

But night came on, and another night still, and Bernard Clive not making his appearance, the good woman began to feel an aggrieved sense of disappointment creeping over her, and to think that it might be possible, despite all that had passed, for her lodger to be as uninterestingly respectable and well-conducted as any of the other residents in Alma Terrace, S. W.

Judge, then, of her annoyance when, just before retiring to rest on Saturday night, Mrs. Grey said in her soft and quiet tone:

"By the way, Mrs. Spinks, my week is up to-day: so I may as well pay you, and give you a week's warning. I shall not re-

quire the rooms after next Tuesday or Wednesday."

"Ma'am!" stammered Mrs. Spinks, drawing back in almost ludicrous dismay, and looking at the silver in that smooth white palm as if it were a nest of vipers to sting. "You—you don't mean as you're a-thinkin' on leaving, m'm?"

"Next week. Yes, Mrs. Spinks. Will you count the money, and receipt it, if you please?"

There was no mistaking that tone. Mrs. Spinks took the money, and began to fumble with it nervously.

"I'm sure, m'm, this is most unlooked. I 'ope as you 'aven't no complaint to make, which if it's anythink I can remedy—an' that chimney do smoke, I know—I'm sure me and Spinks—"

"Thank you, Mrs. Spinks. I have no complaint to make. If I have not been quite at comfortable as I could wish, it is doubtless because you have not been accustomed to lady-lodgers. Is that the receipt? Thank you. Good-night."

And the lady rose and retired, leaving Mrs. Spinks ready to curse her folly in having been uncivil to so quiet and regular a lodger.

The good woman was gone to chapel on the following day when Clive arrived, according to promise; and going straight into the parlor, greeted his friend with the question:

"You got my letter yesterday?"

"Yes, and I thank you for it. It was most kind of you to recommend me."

"Kind! O, to Lady Beatrice! Well, I think it was; but remember I only hinted at you—said you might think of it. I am not at all sure you would like her."

"Why not? You tell me she is young and kind-hearted; from her name, I presume her to be a lady—three very pleasant qualifications. The question is" (but she looked royally calm as she said it) "whether she would like me."

"I do not think there is much doubt of that—do you? Only tell me, why shouldn't you go to the other?—three nice young girls really needing a mother's care, and no one to interfere with—"

"That is out of the question"—and she spoke with something like agitation—"I will not go where there are young girls, or girls at all."

"In the name of patience, why?"

CHAPTER VII.

FLINT AND STEEL.

"OFFERED it! Of course she offered it. You don't think for one moment that I could have asked her for it, do you?"

"To tell you the truth, my dear fellow, I did not think for one moment that you could have *accepted* it. Do I understand that you have?"

"Well, hang it all, Clive! it's hard if a fellow mayn't accept a loan from his own sister, and when it's forced on him too. I declined roundly at first, but she was bent on having her own way; and after all, you see, she doesn't want, and can't touch it now, or for the next three years; and before then I shall have paid her back, and with interest. I insisted on that. I said, 'Understand, Kitty, if I borrow the use of this money now, you must receive five per cent for it.' O, I assure you, I made a point of that."

Clive's lip curled satirically. He and Dick Bellew were sitting over their wine in the Bellews' dining-room after dinner.

"I have no doubt that argument weighed with your sister, only—it is as well to look at the dark side of things, you know, Bellew—what is the good of paying five per cent interest, if you can't return the principal?"

"But of course I shall return it."

"When?"

"O, by degrees. I shall have got settled in something by that time. If only that old uncle of mine would get me my commission, I—"

"My dear fellow, *you* could no more live on your pay as an officer than fly. As to paying between four and five hundred pounds out of it, the notion is simply absurd. Banish it."

Dick writhed disconsolately. He was leaning back in an armchair, with his back turned to the table on which the dessert still remained, and his legs stretched out to the fender. The red firelight, leaping up, flickered and flared on his pale face, ruffled hair, and the strange little lines on his brow.

"It's—it's frightfully hard," he muttered, tugging pettishly at the ends of his fair mustache. "Whatever did my father mean by making such a will? It was a shame!"

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," said Clive, looking up from the walnuts which he was

peeling with delicately lazy fingers, and nibbling while he talked; "I suppose your father wished to insure the rest of his family against beggary."

"O, you're a nice comforter for a man! Can't you tell me any one who would lend the money on Kate's security? You and she don't seem to hit it off well; but I give you my word that it's safe to be handed over the very day she gets it."

"I don't in the least doubt it."

"And as to interest, of course I'd pay that regularly—five, six, even eight, or ten per cent, paid up every quarter—eh? Come, Clive, I know you haven't it yourself, but you must know some one who has."

"Possibly I do; but I should be doing you a very unfriendly act if I suggested any one. Depend on it, you would not thank me for it later."

"I shouldn't! Why not?"

"Simply because I should be assisting you to take a mean advantage of your sister's unthinking generosity. What, Bellew!"—the lazy blue eyes suddenly flashing out like the glitter of a naked sword—"you, a man and able to earn for yourself if you choose, a man with a widowed mother and half a dozen little brothers and sisters, and who ought to be the prop and stay of the whole family, rob a helpless girl of half the little money which, for aught you know, may be her sole dependence in time to come! Bah! if I were to help you in such a selfish cowardly deed, I should despise myself as thoroughly as—"

"As me, I suppose you mean. Say it out. O, pray don't mince words!" cried Dick, angrily; and then the door opened, and Kate stood in the opening, with the lamplight on her white dress and brow, and on the knot of waxlike sweet-smelling narcissus, nestled among the rich-colored wavy coils of her beautiful hair.

She was a quick girl, and at the first glance saw that something more than a difference of opinion was amiss between the two young men. Even Clive's swift change from fiery scorn and indignation to languid absorption in a walnut, was not instantaneous enough to escape her notice; and Dick's face, always ready to take every shade of emotion, was red and quivering with angry mortification. Clive "rose" to the occasion.

"Here is your sister, Bellew," he said, "come to see why we sit quarrelling over

politics in place of responding to the invitation of that pretty melody from above. I assure you I was enjoying it even here, Miss Bellew."

Kate did not believe him, and barely accorded a smile of civility to what she mentally pronounced to be "palaver."

"I was looking for you, Dick dear," she said, turning to her brother. "I want to know about going to the concert to-morrow, because William must order the carriage this evening. Did you get the tickets?"

She had gone up to her brother and laid her hand on his shoulder, with a little caressing gesture which said, "I know that abominable man is quarrelling with you, and making you angry; but I am here now, and with me on your side he can't go on."

Dick got up rather irritably; but when does a man appreciate, or even understand, these little outspoken *finesses* of love, if they come from a mother or sister? Let it be a sweetheart indeed—but that is quite different.

"What a tease you are, Kitty!" he said. "Yes, I got them; but I don't think they were for to-morrow. They're in my desk—no, you can't get them. I suppose I must go myself. Are you ready, Clive?"

He was following his sister to the door, but Clive stopped him with a hand on his shoulder. Kate tripped on all unconscious; and the young lawyer spoke in a very low tone:

"Bellew, you must excuse my plain speaking just now. I am sure you can see the matter for yourself in the same light. Look at that child"—nodding his head in the direction of the white dress fluttering so lightly up stairs—"you would never go and use her poor little money. I know you better than that."

"Then I suppose you know that I am competent to take care of my sister for myself, thank you," retorted Dick; "she's rather more to me, I hope, than she is to you!"

"Rather!" said Clive, lightly. "Except as your sister, I was not indeed aware that she was anything to me."

"Then don't stand up for her against me. I asked you to do me a service. If you wont, I must go to some one who will, that's all. Let us go up stairs."

"One moment! You imply that I have interfered with your conduct. I acknowledge it, and apologize for the impertinence.

Now we will go up if you like, and I will take the opportunity of bidding your mother good-by. I must be off before breakfast to-morrow."

"Going!" cried Dick, turning round, his temper quelled in dismay. "What's that for? I say, Clive, you're not going to quarrel with me, are you?"

"I hope not."

"I suppose you're offended because I lost my temper, just now," said Dick, half sulkily; "but, you see, a fellow don't like to be dictated to, and told he's a— By Jove! you know that's too much"—heating anew at the thought—"and if it had been any other man, I'd—but there! I say, Clive"—dropping again into the minor key—"you don't mean it, I know, and of course you can see for yourself how it is. Don't go and quarrel with a fellow because he can't take your advice in one matter."

"I always mean all that I say," said Clive, coolly. "I've already told you, however, that what I said was unjustifiable. As to quarrelling, that is absurd. I had intended going to-morrow. You forget *I've* got my living to earn."

"I wish to heaven I could earn a living anywhere," said Dick, despondently. "Look at my old screw of an uncle rolling in money, and wont even shell out to—Ugh! I'm the most unlucky beggar on the face of the earth."

He was standing up under the gaslamp, his shoulders humped up, his hands in his pockets, his light hair rumpled, a thousand little lines and wrinkles marring with a *strange network the young boyish face*; the bitten ends of his fair mustache drooping raggedly over the weak nervous mouth; a pitiful picture of wasted youth and anticipated old age, unconscious of its own dishonor. Clive looking down on him, in the full vigor of his strength and manliness, had something of compassion in the gaze. His lips moved with what looked like "Poor wretch!" but the words themselves were inaudible; and just then the two younger girls' voices were heard on the landing above.

"I should so have liked to go," said Eve.

"Fancy a month at Mentone now, when it is so damp and chilly here! Dr. Parish said it would do me more good than all those nasty tonics; and the Saltrams are so nice, and would have treated me quite as a grown-up—O Madgie! isn't it hard?"

"Awfully!" said Madgie's hearty voice; "but mamma says you would want a regular outfit; and then the journey! She can't afford it. I suppose she has to give Dick so much."

"The Saltrams will never ask me again," sighed Eve. "If only we were not so poor! It is well for you who never feel ill"—and then the two girlish voices died away, and the men passed into the drawing-room.

Later in the evening, Kate was just finishing a song which Lady Margaret had asked for, when Clive's voice said in her ear:

"Will you give me ten minutes' conversation after that is done, Miss Bellew?"

Kate stared.

"Certainly," she said, frigidly, and with an amount of astonishment in her manner which caused Clive to add rather pointedly:

"It is about your eldest brother, or I should not presume on such a request."

"About Dick!" said Kate, quickly, and all her frigidity went. They were alone in the back drawing-room, where the piano stood. Heavy ruby-colored curtains draped the arch which divided them from the rest of the company; and through the opening one saw a bright glow of lamp and firelight; Dick sprawling on the sofa; his mother sitting near him, with her cup of tea perilously tilted on her knee; and the juvenile trio playing Bezique at the centre table. It all looked very bright and comfortable. Even Lady Margaret's somewhat shabby black velvet gown assumed a regal gloss and richness in the friendly firelight; and Eve's frost-white face and crocus-colored hair came out in Pre-Raphaelite relief against the bowl of dark green ferns behind her. And yet there were shadows and skeletons unbidden lurking behind all that glow and brightness which made the inner room look dark in comparison, and barely threw more than a refracted gleam on Kate's white dress and shining eyes, as she turned, her pretty dimpled hands still resting the keys, her face upraised in eager half-resentful inquiry, to the tall dark figure of the man leaning with folded arms upon the instrument in front of her.

"What about Dick?"

"Perhaps you will think me very meddling and intrusive in saying anything about your brother to you," Clive answered in the same low tone; "may I therefore ask you to believe that it is as his friend,

and because I like him somewhat, and take as much interest in him as I can spare from my own concerns for any one, that I do so."

"I know Dick considers you his friend," said Kate, her fingers tingling. "No one can help liking him that knows him, and then you are a sort of cousin—of course you can say what you like."

"And you will kindly regard it as said in confidence?" He did not smile at Kate's answer, and she stared again.

"In confidence, Mr. Clive?"

"Exactly. Your mother has, I believe, confidence in me. I simply ask you to have it with me in a matter respecting Dick only, and for Dick's sake."

"If it is for Dick's sake—" said Kate, annoyed, but glancing wistfully at the reclining figure in the outer room—"I suppose—Well, Mr. Clive, what is it?"

He did smile this time. Her reluctance to admit to him anything like intimacy, and her dread of refusing lest she might prejudice Dick, were too childishly manifest; and she saw the smile, misconstrued it, and disliked him more for it.

"Dick is very heavily in debt, as you know, Miss Bellew," said Clive; "I believe it comes to four hundred and eighty pounds; and where has it gone, except in folly and—"

"Please don't talk about Dick's follies," said Kate, sharply. "He mayn't be as prudent and economical as an old miser of ninety. I dare say he isn't. I shouldn't like him if he were. Please go on. I know all about his debts. Perhaps you don't know he is going to pay them all off at once."

"With your money," said Clive. "Yes, he has told me so; and I am hoping to induce you to change your mind."

"Change my mind! What on?"

"And to retract your offer of assisting him with that money your aunt left you."

Kate was speechless with surprise and indignation.

"You propose to lend it to him," said Clive, calmly; "have you ever thought how he is to repay it, or when?"

"Of course not. Why, Mr. Clive, I—"

"He has now the same allowance as most young men in his position—much more than I had in my day—and amply sufficient for every reasonable want—"

"Dick says he can't do upon it, so I think you must be mistaken," said Kate, rebelliously.

"Dick has proved he can't. He has already got into debt three times; and your mother has cleared him with great difficulty, by crippling herself, and depriving her younger children of their just wants. He is now in debt again, and she cannot help him. She is not young, and has already exposed herself to considerable blame and anxiety by outrunning her means for this one son. Do you justify your brother in this, Miss Bellew?"

"No!" cried Kate, with a sort of passionate sob; "I—O poor mamma! of course, I know how hard it is for her; but I am going to pay this. He calls it lending, but it is not. I never want it back. I give it him. No one need trouble about his repaying it—or be afraid of my changing my mind," said Kate, haughtily; "I don't know anything about law, but I would swear or write anything now, and directly I am of age—but surely a lady's word is enough!"

"Not always," said Clive, with perfect coolness. "I am afraid business men would, for example, hardly be satisfied with it in the present case. You forget that, though you call this money yours, it is really not yours, but only in trust for you till you are of age; and if you were to marry it would (unless secured to your private use in the marriage settlement) belong to your husband, and be at his disposal."

"My husband!" cried Kate, half laughing; "one would think he were in existence to hear you and Dick. How do you know I shall ever marry? You talk of contingencies and probabilities, and would like me to behave cruelly and unkindly to darling Dick now, because twenty years hence there is some remote chance of some one else wanting the money which he wants at present. I may be a novice in business, but I know that is—O, please don't say any more. I can't think why you, who call yourself Dick's friend, should be taking so much trouble to harm him."

"I don't suppose you can," observed Clive. "Pray sit still a moment longer, Miss Bellew. My ten minutes are not out yet. It is because I call myself Dick's friend that I want to prevent you from harming him."

"Me!" Dusk as it was, he saw the indignant flash in her bright eyes at this crowning injury.

"Yes, you. I have appealed to you for

your own sake and your mother's, but I had better have spoken for Dick at once. Why should you, Miss Bellew, take advantage of his extravagance to propose and urge his doing a dirty dishonorable act, which would lower him in the eyes of every man of honor? What! you, a lady, with a lady's feelings, and think that a gentleman would encourage your brother in taking a girl's money to pay off his debts—and such debts as his! If you brought him to such a pitch of meanness, he would never recover it, or cease to reproach you. Every penny you have would follow by degrees, and you would see yourself beggared, and your brother an idle helpless spendthrift, cut by every man worth knowing, and a prey to the miserable cads who alone would assist him in such an utterly unmanly mode of money-raising. There! I have made you cry, and when you have dried your eyes you will be satisfied with calling me a brute. That is always the way with you young ladies. However, I can't help it. Please to forgive me. I knew I should do no good, and I've done none. Now I am going, and I dare say you won't shake hands with me, but—"

"Wait one minute," cried Kate, lifting her wet face from the hands in which she had hidden it. "I am not crying; and as to calling you names—but I hope I am not as unjust and discourteous as—"

"As I am, *par exemple*," put in Clive, with a lively recollection of what took place on the evening of their first acquaintance. "Well, I have heard young ladies use even as strong expressions as 'brute' in regard to people they disliked. But I beg your pardon. Of course, I have no right to suppose you could do so."

It was keen retaliation, and cut to the quick; for Kate remembered too, and with a misery of shame which he was far from guessing, or he had never so spoken. If he could but have thought the words without saying them; or having said them, if he could only have taken them back! The sarcastic retort was hardly out of Clive's lips before he repented it, and was already cursing his own irritated pride, when Kate stood up flushing and paling like one who has received a stinging blow, but speaking with more dignity than he had supposed her capable of.

"Mr. Clive," she said, looking up at him with very childlike simplicity, "I know

what you mean. You heard me say something very foolish to my brother the day you came here. It was wrong of me—hasty and uncharitable, but if you are one of a large family, you must know that brothers and sisters often talk in a thoughtless way to each other, and use strong expressions without meaning them, which they would be very sorry to repeat in earnest. If I had not thought it impossible you could remember or lay weight to such a silly speech, I would have apologized for it before, as I do now."

How strangely opposites meet! No two women could be more widely unlike than Kate Bellew and Averil Grey; and yet there was something of the latter's queenliness in the junior's girlish figure as she made her little *amende*. Clive felt it at once, and answered in a more subdued tone than she had ever heard from him.

"It was I who was wrong, and you have rebuked me justly. Of course I know the difference between a hasty word in one's own family, and—but it is no use excusing myself; only, believe me, if I have disgusted you by my thin-skinned vanity, I have disgusted myself much more."

Kate believed it, indeed. There was a depth of self-contempt in the proud man's tone which moved her own generosity, and as he rose to go she checked him with outstretched hand.

"Let us both forget it, Mr. Clive, and think of my brother instead. What you said about him was dreadful. I had never thought of it in that light. Are you sure you meant it?"

"Every word."

"But what shall I do? His debts must be paid, and I have promised—"

"Will you let me advise you?"

"If you will."

"Tell your brother that you find what you proposed was impossible, being illegal, and that you would not be allowed to carry it out. If you will give me your word of honor, Miss Bellew, to do this, and to resist any after effort to induce you to make over part or all of your small property for your brother's use, I will pledge you my word that all he owes at present shall be settled within three months."

"Will you really?" cried Kate, all coldness forgotten in joy—"but how? He told me you could not—"

"Lend him the money? No; I am a

poor man myself; but I can manage to procure it for him, and on such conditions as will oblige him to curtail expenses which are ruining him, and force him to exert himself a little, as the eldest son of a widowed mother should be proud to do if he has any manliness in him."

"You are very hard," said Kate, wincing; "I beg your pardon, but I love Dick, and indeed he is manly. You don't know what a dear good fellow he is. Many young men are extravagant at first."

"And go to ruin in the end, I dare say; but you would hardly call a man hard who would prevent his brother from tumbling over a precipice, even if he had to give him a rough jerk. Do you know why I care enough about Dick to try to check him? Simply because he has a look of some one I loved—my younger brother, who went to the bad, and—died in it."

He held out his hand as he spoke—some-

thing like a quiver about the stern mouth; and Kate answered sympathetically:

"I will give you my promise, Mr. Olive, only save Dick."

"Help him to save himself, Miss Bellew; and now thank you for your long patience. We don't get on prettily together"—and he smiled—"but even though you mayn't like me, or I you, we will remember that this is a bargain, and keep to it accordingly."

"And I almost did like him for a moment," said Kate to herself, when he had joined the others. "I am glad he didn't guess it. A hard discourteous man, whom one can't be kind to. And, after all, he is only going to get the money from some one who will worry poor Dick; but it is for Dick's good—and the dear boy is rather idle, though I would never let any one hear me say so."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

CHAPTER VIII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

KATE had given her word, and never dreamt of going back from it; but the task was not an easy one, and she might have remained puzzling over the miserable question, "how to do it," forever, had not Dick himself assisted her to the solution. Dick was not happy in his mind. Lord Lovegoats had, to quote the young man's own phrase, snubbed the nose off his face on the occasion of their meeting in Hyde Park. Lady Margaret's own nose was quite red from incessant rubbing, and her face wore an irritating expression of despondency, much like the handkerchiefs with broad black borders which some ladies will flourish in the world's face, as a sort of outward symbol of the grief they ought to feel; while Clive had said nasty rude things to him, which slashed up poor Dick's self-love, and made him nervous and petulant. He had not the least idea of going back from his own way, or relinquishing such a tempting windfall as Kate's money; but somehow the idea had lost its first charm, and even perpetual iterations of "Of course it's only a loan, I shall pay it back to her with interest, and all that," failed to afford him the moral consolation that might have been expected. When on the following day Kate saw her brother sauntering up to her with his hands in his pockets, and a more jaded look than usual on his face, her heart began to leap in quick impulsive throbs, and she was fain to stoop her head over the bowl of tulips and hyacinths she was arranging, to hide the rush of color to her face.

Dick did not speak at first, but stood looking on in moody silence till Kate, feeling that her face was betraying her, gave him a spray of white fairy-like bells, and asked him if it wouldn't be a beauty for his button-hole.

"Beauty? H'm! O, it's well enough," grumbled Dick. "I say, it's fine to be you, with nothing to do or think of but playing with flowers and that rubbish."

"Can I do anything for you, Dick, dear? and, O! don't you like to see the flowers set out prettily round you?" said Kate.

Dick grunted again.

"For me? No, of course not. Since you're so clever at twisting flowers about, Katie, you'd better stick to it, and then you'll be able to make swell wreaths and crosses for my grave when I'm in it. I dare say it won't be long first."

"O Dick!" cried Kate, with a quick shudder of pain; and then her native common sense came to her aid, and threw back the shock his words had given her. "How can you talk such nonsense?" she said, with a little wholesome anger.

"O, of course it's nonsense to you," said Dick, sulkily. "None of you might care; but I tell you what, it'll come to that some day, if things aren't altered."

It was on the tip of Kate's tongue to say that she supposed it would come to that some day, whether things were altered or not: Nature not being likely to abrogate her law of universal dissolution in favor of Dick Bellew; but the retort never got further than the least little sparkle in the corner of her bright eyes. Kate had plenty of mother-wit in her composition; but she would have smothered it all rather than give the tiniest twinge to those she loved, so she controlled herself and said nothing; and Dick took umbrage thereat, as was natural.

"Well, have you nothing to say to-day?" he asked. "Upon my word, this is a lively house to come home to! A schoolroom full of noisy children, my mother going about with a face like a galvanized gargoyle; and you so abominably rude to my friends, you actually drive them out of the house. Upon my life, it's enough to—but there, it's all of a piece!" And Dick turned on his heel with what he meant for a bitter laugh of derision.

Poor fellow! he had no idea what a delightful subject for a comic paper he would have made; and, fortunately, Kate was too fond of him to see the joke as keenly as she would had it been any one else.

"Dick," she said, gravely, "I did not mean to be rude to Mr. Clive. He does not like me—he said so;" and the young lady's cheeks colored high at the remembrance; "so it was not to be expected that I should be very *empressee* to him. Of course, every one has different tastes in girls" (Kate thought here that Mr. Clive's tastes were very different to the majority of her friends), "but some people might think it rude to express them in—"

"Did Clive tell you he didn't like you?" cried Dick, turning round with a laugh which rather hurt Kate. "By Jove! he's a cool hand—too cool by half sometimes." And the laugh died out in a sudden frown. "I'm not sorry for some things that he would go to-day. Those successful fellows haven't much sympathy for a poor devil who doesn't know what to do for a sixpence to bless himself with. Of course, it's all nonsense about my taking your money." And there he came to a pause waiting to be contradicted, and set right with himself.

Kate, however, disappointed him. Never thinking but that he was in earnest, her heart gave a great bound, and she looked up in nervous silence to see what would follow.

"You might regret offering it, or want it back as soon as you came of age, and before I could give it to you," Dick went on, rather crossly; "and though I needn't say I should return it with interest— But of course that was only a joke of yours. We neither of us meant to touch it for my debts," finished up the young man, in a tone whose rising indignation at not being interrupted again savored of the comic.

Very slowly, and with a burning face, Kate answered, her hands busy among a heap of yellow tulip-buds, the sunshine on her drooping head:

"You think it is better not? Y—yes, perhaps it would not do—" And there she came to a full stop, silenced by the burst of bitter incredulous laughter which greeted her faltering words. Ah, dear me! was not Clive to be indeed detested for setting her so detestable a task!

"Wouldn't do?" repeated Dick, scornfully. "Ha! ha! ha! So you've changed your mind already, have you? Upon my word, you're of a prudent nature, my fair sister. It's well I never thought of taking you at your word. I knew too well the

worth of a woman's promise; though I must say that it's rather insulting too, and there are not many men who would stand such a reflection on their honor from a bit of a girl. Pray, did you think—"

"No, Dick, no; of course not," stammered poor Kate, without in the least knowing what she was accused of thinking. "Indeed, it's not that; I only thought that other people might say that—I mean that no one would accept such—O Dick, please don't think I want to keep it!"

"Don't begin to cry!" cried Dick, impatiently. "That I can't stand. Of course you want to keep it. What else? You would have liked to get a cheap name for generosity, but when you came to think—"

"Letter for you, please, sir," said Buttons, opening the door briskly, and with a perfect consciousness that Miss Kate had whisked round to the fire to hide her tears, and that Mr. Dick was walking about in a rage, written in every prim pucker of his innocent countenance. Dick proved the latter by the way he snatched the letter off the tray; and Buttons retired to linger a minute or two on the mat outside the drawing-room door.

"From Clive!" muttered the young man; and then he tore it open, and read the pencilled note within:

"DEAR BELLEW,—I have just heard of a friend who will be willing to let you have a loan of £500 on your note-of-hand, and under certain conditions arranged before-hand. They are rather hard; but unless you have a better offer, I would advise your looking in at my chambers to-morrow morning between ten and eleven to talk them over."

Kate was looking eagerly, questioningly at her brother, but her glance sank before the triumphant mirth with which he turned on her.

"Well, my dear, you needn't have been in such a dreadful hurry to secure your money-bags. I told you nothing would have induced me to touch them, but I just thought I'd try how much worth there was in your grand offers. Ha! Kate, I'll know who *not* to trust to another time. Perhaps you wouldn't have been in such haste to retract, if you had known that I never intended to accept your sham generosity. There are plenty of people willing to lend me twice as much if I would only ask for

it. And listen to this—" And he read aloud the first part of the letter, ending with "There, Kittie! I hope you see other people have more confidence in your brother than you. Where's my hat? O, don't make any protestations; I'm sick of talk. What have I done with my hat? Be so kind as to tell my mother I shan't dine at home. I'm going to the club. No, I don't know when I'll be back. What is that to any one? My family are not so pleasant or agreeable that I should stay at home from morning till night. O, there's my hat! What is it doing there? 'Pon my soul, it amuses me to think you fancied I ever meant to accept your offer." With which final shot exit Master Dick, thinking himself so great and grand, poor boy, in having humiliated his young sister, and utterly unconscious of how pitifully little he would have appeared in any but her generous eyes.

These young men who snub their sisters, bully their mothers, and sneer at all home duties and home affections, in the hope of appearing manly and dashing in the eyes of their fellow-men—does no one ever stoop to enlighten them as to the utter unmanliness the contemptible pettiness of such a line of conduct? Does no one ever tell them that the strongest and bravest men are always the most tender and unselfish; that the greatest of this world's conquerors have bowed their head at the sacred name of "Mother;" and that the God-man himself has turned the immutable laws of creation aside, and broken the very bonds of death, in pity to a sister's tears? No, the fact of it is that men worthy of the name look on these petty mannikins with too vast a contempt, to care how much the latter expose the meanness of which they think it "grand" to boast. Looking on the women in their families as precious and tender things, doubly sacred from their helplessness, men have no pity on the ephemera who are almost invariably the curse of the homes they despise, the lifelong burden on the women they ill-treat.

When Dick was gone, Kate cried unbuked, though not for long; as, her horse coming to the door, she was obliged to get ready for her ride, and fresh air and brisk exercise soon carry away the tears of youth. "O dear! I hope Dick will be in a good humor when he comes home this evening," Kate hoped.

An idle hope; or, at least, one which whether granted or not mattered little to Kate, as Dick did not come home till many hours after his sister's brown eyes were closed in healthy sleep, and faint whitish streaks were beginning to appear in the eastern horizon, and herald the approach of day. Then, indeed, Lady Margaret's maternal watchfulness heard the latchkey turn in the lock below, and the unsteady step of her first born stumbling as it passed up stairs to his own room. Poor lady! many a watchful hour had Dick given her now; and the younger ones wondered at the composure with which, on the following morning, she received the news that Mr. Dick had a headache, and wasn't able to come down to breakfast—merely ordering a cup of very strong coffee to be made and taken up to him, with no comment beyond a faint expression of annoyance on the news. Kate, with the egotism of youth, put down Dick's headache and non-appearance to the ill-usage he was laboring under from herself in particular and the family in general; but Lady Margaret knew better, and when her son made his appearance for a moment, before going to his friend's chambers—pale, hollow-eyed and nervous, with shaky hands and irritable brow—the mother met his complaints with a lack of outward sympathy which shocked Kate, who was keeping in the background till forgiven.

"This sort of thing will never do, Dick," she said, with an air of aggravation which puzzled her daughter—"even if you were only killing yourself; but the example—I am thankful Tom isn't at home." And Dick shrugged his shoulders pettishly, and went out with some mumbling remark about "lecturings," which Kate tried to excuse, as mother was a little bit hard. She was often up awfully late at balls, and had a headache, and didn't come down till late in the morning, without being blamed for it the least bit in the world. And now he was gone without looking at her, so that she did not know whether she were forgiven or not.

Evening decided in the negative. Dick did not come home to dinner; and when he made his appearance at teatime, it was in company with Clive, upon whom Lady Margaret at once seized for a confidential talk, during which Kate had leisure to find out that her brother was even more thoroughly out of sorts than before, and dis-

posed to snub her most ingratiating advances. Madge and he had already had words on account of a cuff bestowed on George, whom the younger girl considered as her own special property to quarrel with and protect, so that those two juveniles had retired to spend the evening roasting chestnuts in the schoolroom; and Kate, finding that Eve was, as usual, too much absorbed in a book for gossip, retreated to the piano, in hopes that some of Dick's favorite music might have a soothing effect on him.

She was anything but pleased when, after about ten minutes' solitude, some one sauntered under the arch, and behold, it was not Dick, but the young barrister.

"Am I interrupting you?" said Clive, with that half-smile which Kate hated on his face, and which seemed to say, "I know you detest me, but I don't care in the least."

Aloud he said in addition:

"I thought you might like to hear what has been settled about your brother's affairs."

"Thank you," said Kate, who was indeed longing to know, though not from him; "I dare say my mother or Dick will tell me all about it to-night; we always talk over family things when we are alone. Has it not been a lovely day?"

"Very lovely," replied Clive, the smile a little more visible—she positively seemed to amuse him!—"and the night is still more so—too fine altogether to be wasted indoors, wherefore I am come to bid you good-night, and leave you to your family chat."

"Good-night," said Kate, rather unwarrantably mortified; and then she remembered that Dick had accused her of being rude to his friend, and driving him out of the house. Was she doing so now? Her cheeks flamed up at the idea.

"But it is very early," she said, trying not to speak stiffly, and hoping Dick heard and approved, "and the night will keep. Are you tired of us that you hurry away so soon?"

"I am not the least tired of you," said Clive, "not having had sufficient opportunity—as yet; but 'prevention is better than cure,' you know, so— However, I really want to speak to you for one minute, so if you will try to endure me for so long, and not leave off your playing, I will do so."

"About Dick again?" asked Kate, with a quick nervous thrill producing quite a little

peal of false notes, and which made her brother exclaim in horror from his easy-chair.

"No," said Clive, gravely, "except that I know you have kept your word—at some cost, I am afraid."

Kate's color rose again. The treacherous color always *would* come and go, in her fair young skin, in that unpleasant way.

"At what cost?" she asked, proudly. "I don't quite know what you mean. Of course I did as I promised. I don't know if I was wise—"

"It is always wise to take advice from people who *do* know," said Clive, calmly. "But what I want to ask you now is something quite different. You know Lady Vanborough, I believe?"

"Bee Vanbor—" began Kate, then checking herself quickly—"you mean the younger Lady Vanborough, don't you—Sir Alec's widow? She is one of my greatest friends."

"And so you really like her? Well, I agree with you."

"Do you?" said Kate, a little satirically.

"And I am very glad to hear your opinion."

"Why?"

"O, because I thought that one woman could praise another without a single 'but' (always provided that the latter were ten years older than herself, and not likely to cross her path in any way). Good-evening"—with which Clive departed as imperturbable as usual, and leaving Kate fuming because she knew that he had not given her a shadow of his real reason, and was equally aware of, and indifferent to, her knowledge of that fact.

CHAPTER IX.

BERNARD CLIVE.

BERNARD CLIVE had had a hard life, and it had tended to make him to all appearance, and certainly to his own belief, a hard man. His father, a country rector, had from the day of his wife's death concentrated his whole affections on one child, the baby whose birth had cost its mother's life; and who, after growing up into a delicate handsome boy, wayward and winning, and spoiled by father, brothers and sisters, had gone to college, got into trouble, drifted from bad to worse, and died a miserable death before his twentieth birthday in the quaint secluded home, whose happiness he

had destroyed from the first hour of his wasted life.

It was Bernard who had followed him through his evil courses, trying with patient brotherly kindness to lead him from them; but Bernard had always given way to little Cyril in their childish days, and it was not likely Cyril would give way to him now, until it was too late for amendment; and when his brother brought him home, it was not to begin a new life in this world, but to pass the last few weeks of existence in seeking for a better "length of days, even life eternal" in the world to come.

Bernard used to say quite coolly, and as a matter of course, "The governor likes better to see Philip about him," and no one in the family grieved more heartily than Bernard when, just before Philip left Oxford, the rector, whose eyes had long been failing, lost the sight of them altogether, and was thus shut out from the view of that face which had grown so dear to him. His daughter, who came next to Bernard, was married already; but her husband had died in the first year of their married life: died of softening of the brain, a malady so terrible that, but for her elder brother's aid and sympathy, her own mind might have given way under the strain. He brought her home too, after all was over; and shortly afterwards Philip took orders, and returned to Woodleigh as his father's curate.

"My right hand and my eyes," the old man would say, fondly. "Bernard is a clever man, they tell me; but he's away in London doing for himself, and prospering finely; and I should be lost without Philip. Fancy the dear lad consenting to live here with his allowance for a salary—and for my sake! But Phil had always Cyril's eyes, and his was a tender heart through all."

Mr. Clive never guessed that it was Bernard who had persuaded Philip into the sacrifice, and had used his own prosperity to augment his brother's allowance to the rate of a very fair salary, frequently denying himself even necessary comforts and indulgences to add to those of the family at home. Philip knew it, and so did Harriet (Mrs. Barnard), who often received crisp bank notes for ten and twenty pounds from her brother; but with a peculiar shy reserve which, springing from being undervalued, had been his burden through life, he had begged that his father might not be told; and his request was carefully complied with.

"It is a real pleasure to my father to receive anything from you, Phil," he said to his brother; "it would not be so from me;" and the curate acquiesced.

It had grown to be a family matter of course that Bernard was no favorite. "A dry, cold, taciturn sort of fellow like he did not care about that sort of thing." Some people must get the kicks, and some the halfpence in life. Philip got the halfpence, and Bernard loved him well enough to be content with the kicks: loved them all well enough to be glad to drink beer instead of wine, and see Harriet driving her now infirm father in a little pony-carriage—his gift—and deny himself an autumn tour, that Harriet's one little girl might be sent to an expensive school at Brighton. Mrs. Barnard had been left badly off in consequence of the legal inability of her husband to make a will during the last months of his life. He had made one some years before his marriage, leaving the bulk of his property among relations of his own; and on that will they acted, leaving Harriet with little more than had been secured to her in the marriage settlements for herself and her child. It was an iniquitous affair, but even Bernard's law practice failed in giving his sister the victory. He did the best he could for her instead; and Harriet thought him surly and unsympathetic because, when she abused her husband's relations with feminine warmth and vehemence, he merely shrugged his shoulders with the sarcastic observation:

"Merely the way of the world, my dear. Don't excite yourself, and don't put your faith in relations in future."

"Bernard! how can you?" cried his sister, indignantly. "I am sure there are no other relations who could behave so shamefully, so meanly, so—"

"Are you?" said Bernard, coolly; "I'm not. If you take my advice, Harry, you'll never be sure of any one, unless it happens to be his own interest to further yours."

"I don't believe you, Bernard!" cried his sister; "you mayn't be very passionately attached to any one, but I don't believe you would ever do an unkind turn to me, or Minie, even if it were for your interest—horrid word!"

Bernard stooped and kissed her, laughing. He was not given to caresses; but even that shred of justice moved his gratitude. It was something to be told by those to

whom he devoted himself that they did not think he would rob them! Some minds are obliged to be contented with small favors.

Philip had been the trouble of late. His disposition was not very unlike Cyril's; though his life had as yet been as exemplary as his brother's had been the reverse; and though, in addition to the latter's passionate, impulsive character, he shared Bernard's obstinacy and determination of will. The Clives were descended from some of the bluest blood in England, and, like many people whose means are not commensurate with their station, were intensely proud of it; wherefore it was of course necessary that if Philip married—as was very likely, he being peculiarly sensitive to feminine grace and beauty of a refined type—his choice should rest on some one as well dowered in point of birth as of worldly means. Both Bernard and Harriet had been secretly anxious on this subject of late; the former, lest Philip should go and fall in love with some penniless girl—"When of course they would have a dozen children at once, and I should have to keep them," thought Bernard; the latter, lest Philip should fix on a wife among the middle-class young ladies in the little country town nearest to Woodleigh—"Some one whom one would never dream of visiting," said Mrs. Barnard, with a little shiver of dismay, when she discussed the subject with her father, Philip being out among the poor.

"No fear, my love, no fear!" the old gentleman answered, confidently. "If it were Bernard, indeed—a queer fellow always, and too much like your Uncle William for me to fathom—but Phil will never disappoint us. Wait a while, Harry my dear, and you'll see that he's as particular as we could be; there's time enough."

But Harriet had not to wait long; the time was near at hand.

At the bottom of the rectory-garden stood a small cottage smothered in jessamine, and originally built for some particular curate belonging to a previous rector. Mr. Clive, having no private fortune of his own, had not been able to keep a curate; and during the boys' school and college days, the cottage had been let to an elderly female cousin. Unfortunately, just as Mr. Clive's blindness was coming on, this good lady found out that the cottage must be damp. In one room, where she had not been during nine of the thirteen years of her residence

there, she found blue mould on the paper, and stains of moisture most distressingly evident upon the ceiling. On the strength of this she took to bed with a bad cold; and on the strength of that cold she died some four months later, declaring with her last breath—she being then some ninety odd years of age—that it was the damp of the cottage which had killed her. Harriet wrote up to Bernard, begging him to find a new tenant for them.

"Either a relation or a friend, if you possibly can, dear Bernard. Remember, the cottage opens *into* our garden, so that whoever lives there must be almost one with us. You know my dear father's extreme exclusiveness, and how entirely I share it; so I need not ask you to be more than careful in your choice of a tenant; and you are aware that at present it is impossible for us to afford any alterations in the garden fence which would at all cut off the cottage from us, in case of the people there being undesirable for intimates."

Bernard was aware of both facts. A couple of weeks later he wrote:

"I have just heard of a likely tenant for our cottage from our cousin, Canon Digby. A widow lady, with an invalid relation, has been boarding with his brother-in-law, Dr. Dunn, at Hastings. The winds there, and the noise of a family, are too much for the invalid lady, and they are anxious to find a quiet little cottage in a pretty country place. Both Canon Digby and his brother-in-law speak in more than high terms of both ladies, the widow especially. She is still in her first weeds, middle-aged, somewhat reserved and exclusive, but dignified, graceful and refined enough to win respect and attention from every one. The canon is sure you would be charmed with her. However, as she seems to the full as particular as you are, perhaps a personal interview would be best before deciding anything. To this end I have suggested that the widow lady should go down to Woodleigh, see the cottage, and pay you a visit."

This suggestion was carried out, and with such effect on both Mrs. Barnard and the visitor, that before another fortnight the two strange ladies were comfortably established at the cottage.

"My poor cousin, Miss Hyacinth de Vaux, said it was damp," said Mrs. Barnard, while going round the little tenement with her widowed lodger. "But considering that

she was ninety-five, poor dear, and had lived thirteen years here without ever using this room, I *do* think imagination had something to do with it."

"It looks to me as dry, and pretty, and sunshiny as a house could well be; and I am sure the quiet and country air will agree with my poor relative," answered the other lady, in the full gracious tones which had taken Mrs. Barnard's fancy from the first. "We will certainly seek no further."

And she who spoke was the stranger we have already met in Alma Terrace—the object of Mrs. Spinks's suspicions—Mrs. Grey.

Harriet, the ultra-exclusive, had set a dangerous example in yielding to the fascination of a voice and manner exceptionally refined. Philip followed it.

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING TO WEAR.

THERE was to be a grand ball at No. 4 Gresham Square, the De Ponsonbys' family mansion, for it was the day of Petre's coming of age.

"We didn't give a ball when Dick came of age," said Kate to her mother.

"I should think not," said Lady Margaret, with a shiver. "If Dick were only half as steady as Petre! But he has left me no money for balls or anything else. No one can help a stammer, but there are much worse things—"

"Now, mother," cried Kate, "you don't mean to say that you'd rather have that stiff clumsy Petre *with* his stammer, than poor darling Dick, who can cure himself? By the way"—with a sudden change of subject for a still more interesting one—"I must have a new dress. I've nothing to wear—positively nothing—and did you notice that one in Regent Street?—sea-green tulle bouffante up to the waist, and with a cloud of tulle thrown over it, just looped back with a long trail of daisies and primroses. It was—O! too exquisite—the very thing if I were a blonde; but if I had something like it in mauve, with—"

"Are you sure you have nothing that will do?" broke in Lady Margaret. "You had a new dress for Lady Gore's dance; and I declare I don't know what to do when the bills come in."

"It is a great bother," said Kate, laying her pretty head sympathetically against her

mother's knee, and turning up her face for a kiss, "but—O no, none of them would do; and I did wear the one you mean again, just before Christmas, and got it frightfully torn. Don't you remember? And anyhow one must have a new dress for a grand affair like this. Every one else will, you know"—an unanswerable argument, before which Lady Margaret yielded, as she always did to Dick's pleadings, sighing but silenced.

"Of course I don't want you to look worse than other girls," she said, sadly.

"King Cophetuas don't look at beggar-maids now-a-days, mammy dear, I can assure you; and you know my Bashaw must be an extra big one, able to set Dick swimming, and take the whole family—By the way, after all I am not sure about lilac being a good color. It doesn't light up nearly as well as green; but then I am rather dark for green, and I'm not dark enough for maize. What a hateful person I am! I don't know any one so horribly difficult to dress if one even *thinks* of anything but white!" and Kate puckered up her brow, and almost stamped her small foot, in hearty disgust for her own unmanageable appearance. Said Lady Margaret, soothingly:

"Don't think about it, dear; but order the fly, and we will go to Madame Clarice at once."

She sighed again, poor hard-up mother! as she spoke; and yet she never thought of urging the economy which she knew was becoming positively necessary; and Kate, who would have parted with all her little fortune to her brother, and been glad of so doing, dreamt as little of the possibility of going without a new dress when she was tired of her old ones, as of going without her dinner when she was hungry.

Why should the idea occur to her when nothing had ever suggested it?

Later in the evening she was describing to Dick the dress she had fixed upon, and enhancing on the sweep of the train and arrangement of the flowers, with an animation which made Clive (he was always there now, Kate said) observe in his driest manner:

"I never appreciated till now the importance of dress. What a wonderful thing it is! The construction of a new ministry seems nothing to that of a lady's 'polonaise.'"

"Fancy your knowing the correct name!" said Kate, good-humoredly; "but it is a wonderfully tiresome thing if you like, es-

pecially if you are not a blonde," and her face took a pensive shade as she thought of the green dress aforementioned. "It is so difficult to decide," she went on. "I have not ordered it yet; but I think—don't you, mamma?—that the one I was describing to Dick was the nicest."

"It was frightfully expensive," said Lady Margaret, "frightfully. I can't think where Madame Clarice gets her conscience. Twelve guineas for a dress which will only look fresh for one evening! You will ruin me, Katie."

"Why, you dear old darling!" cried Kate, putting a white hand on either of her mother's shoulders, "you wouldn't like me to go in a dressing-gown, and I haven't a dress of any sort that I haven't worn before."

"Do girls' dresses only wear once?" asked Dick. "What awful rubbish they must be! Ha, Kate! don't you preach to me about extravagance again. We are all tarred with the same brush, you see, Clive."

Clive said nothing. He merely looked at the fire and smiled; but that smile stung Kate more than any words, and spoke, to her, a whole volume of comments on her magnanimous assertions uttered so short a time before. The red blood rushed up into her face with such a glow, it even dyed the pretty fingers still resting on her mother's shoulders.

"Why, Kate, how red you are!" cried George, who, his bedtime not having arrived, was amusing himself by swinging on to the back of Clive's chair, and taking a lively interest in the conversation of his elders. Clive looked up sharply, meeting Kate's honest shame-faced blushes with a keenly scrutinizing glance; and George found himself suddenly ousted from his post of espionage on the barrister's chair.

"There is one great advantage in ladies' dresses over luxuries in general," said the latter, presently. "They are bought, made and worn not for the wearer's selfish indulgence, but for the purely unselfish reason of giving pleasure to other people, or doing credit to her own. No one ever heard of a woman buying a ball-dress to wear in her bedroom, or for her own solitary gratification; therefore one of these two objects must be the motive of all those ethereal 'toilettes' which gratify our eyes at night; and I have no doubt that Miss Bellew's will fulfil both. By the way"—with a swift

change of subject—"I also am going to this famous ball."

"Are you?" said Dick, languidly. "I didn't know you knew the De Ponsonbys."

"I do not; but a friend of yours, Lady Beatrice Vanborough, does, and has kindly asked me to go with her."

"And you agreed! The De Ponsonbys seem to be enlisting all their benevolent acquaintances in the cause of helping to fill those hideous rooms of theirs. I shan't show myself, I know."

"Why, Dick! O!" cried Kate, waking from a meditation which, to judge by expression, was not a happy one—"all I cared about in going was that you would be there."

"Thank you, my child, but you see I've no hankering to meet Uncle Theo after his language in the park last week; and he's just as likely as not to be there. De Ponsonby was a sub. under him in my lord's army days; and they're both 'Carlton' men, you know."

"But Uncle Theo never goes to balls—does he, mother? O Dick! do come. There will be no one else there that I ~~can~~ the least for, except Bee Vanborough," said Kate, pathetically, and quite unconscious of the poor compliment she was paying to the gentleman who was so busy trying to arrange the focus of Eve's stereoscope, that the young lady might employ it on some photographs he had brought her. He saw it, for he was quick-sighted to a fault; but he also saw her unconsciousness, and smiled, not ill-temperedly. I don't think he was an ill-tempered man, though he called himself one.

Dick hemmed and hawed, and wouldn't promise. "Well—if Clive is going," he said at last. "And I wonder if any of the other fellows I know are."

"A fellow I know is," said Clive, "and, by the way, about the last person I should have expected to meet at a ball here."

"Who's that?"

"O, no one you know. I met him in New York when I was over there a year or so ago. He was not going into general society at all then—lived a hermit sort of life, and wouldn't look at a woman."

"Dear me! Why?" said Kate, opening her brown eyes in great amazement at this last item.

"A sort of modern Timon," added Eve. "I should like to meet him."

"Only he wouldn't look at you," said Madge, "so where would be the good?"

"Eve isn't a woman, so he would," put in George. "She's only a girl. O, is it my bedtime? I'm sure it isn't nine yet. O, need I go yet, mamma?"

"But what had made your friend so misanthropical?" said Kate, returning to the charge as George was ejected. Clive looked a little annoyed, as if he had said more than he meant already.

"O—some family trouble, I believe. I dare say he would not care to have it remembered now. By the way, he was not a friend of mine; I only met him once or twice. He had been abroad for years."

"Is he going with Lady Bee?" asked Dick; and Clive answered, "No," rather shortly, as if he did not care to pursue the subject. Kate started another.

"Talking of Bee, mamma," she said, "do you know she has engaged a companion at last? She wrote to tell me so. I do think it is the funniest idea."

"I thought ladies in her position often wanted a friend or a companion," said Clive, as Lady Margaret said, "Very funny," in acquiescence.

"Yes, and when her husband died three years ago, everybody said she ought to get one for propriety because she looked so young," replied Kate; "but she set herself against it quite obstinately. Mamma was quite vexed with her."

"Well, my dear, because it was out of sheer opposition to her mother-in-law."

"Well, mother mine, old Lady Vanborough is so disagreeable; and really Bee did not need a companion. She is one of those women who are perfectly able to take care of themselves anywhere."

"And therefore, as a woman's vocation in life is to be taken care of, thoroughly unwomanly," put in Dick.

"Dick," said Kate, solemnly, "you don't know anything in the world about women. I could take care of myself, and I'm not unwomanly."

Clive laughed—"Logic unanswerable!" he said. "At any rate, Lady Bee has testified to her womanliness by yielding now—'Best proof of womanhood you still will find in that sweet aptitude to change her mind.'"

"Yes, but this is such a queer arrangement," Kate said. "Nobody thinks she needs a companion now; so she has been looking out for one for some months, only

not to go out with her, not to accompany her to the opera or anywhere, not even to appear when she has guests at home, without a special invitation; just for a companion for herself when she's alone and dull, to talk, or read, or sing to her as she wants, write letters, and all that sort of thing. She has been ever so long finding one to suit; for she would have a lady, and a pleasant-looking one; and pleasant-looking ladies generally wanted to go out with her; but now she has got a lady who hates society, and agrees with her in all her notions."

"In other words, a companion who objects to playing foil to Bee, as much as Bee objects to her companion playing sheepdog to her," said Dick, yawning. "Sensible women! And what like is the damsel? Elderly, I presume?"

"Not old, Bee says; and adds—O, here is her letter:

"She has such a lovely face and style, that simply to have her sitting near me at work will be paradise, after solitary gapings by myself, or dual bickerings with one of the Vanborough girls. If it were only to prevent those detestable young women from volunteering visits on the score of my loneliness, she will be a blessing. You must come and look at her."

"Upon my word!" cried Dick. "We'll go together, Kittie. A girl too, and secluded in Bee Vanborough's boudoir! What an inducement to put up with her unbearable tongue, and go there often! Lovely, eh?"

"I don't think the lady is a girl, with all due deference to your anticipations, Bellew," spoke Clive very slowly. "I am afraid you will be disappointed. You forget your friend's tendency to exaggerate."

"Why, have you seen her there? What is she like then?"

"Like a middle-aged widow lady, with her hair in bands, and a widow's cap, and sufficient quiet reserve to hold her position," Clive answered, in the same chilling way, and rising to go. Dick made a face of disgust.

"So much for your swans, Kittie! I am glad Clive saved me from being duped into a call. And what about the loveliness, eh, Clive?"

Clive was just bidding good night to Lady Margaret. He looked over his shoulder.

"Really, you must not ask me to pronounce against any lady's claims in that

line—besides, every man has a different opinion in these matters. What poet was it who said, 'O womanhood, most fair within thyself?'—Good-night. Miss Bellew, I shall expect to see you the most magnificently plumed of all the birds of paradise on Friday next."

"He will be disappointed then," said Kate, gravely, when the door had closed. "Dick, dear (nestling up to her brother), 'I am so glad you said *that* about extravagance. Do you believe that it really hadn't crossed my mind before?'"

"What hadn't? Are you crazy, child?" asked Dick, pinching the plump arms linked round his.

"No, but I am going to manage with what I've got. I hope I shan't look very horrid and dowdy," said Kate, with a little pout of her ripe under lip, "but if it will save twelve pounds—and at all events" (brightening up) "you will have to go with me now, for if I am a dreadful failure I shall want some one to stand by me."

"Thanks; a calm suggestion! I wonder the idea doesn't cross your limited mind, Miss Kittie, that if you were a 'dreadful failure,' as you call it, I might be ashamed to show in your company."

"A very likely notion! As if you cared less for me than I for you!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

A TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

CHAPTER XI.

"EYES LIKE LAMPS."

AFTER all, the ball was a success, and the De Ponsonbys had not to "gnash their teeth" over the emptiness of their rooms. Reflected in the long mirrors, and relieved against the crimson draperies, troops of whit-robed nymphs, and whiter-fronted cavaliers, moved to and fro, or floated round in languid circles to the strains of a band of musicians skillfully hidden behind a small forest of azaleas—white, rose-colored and scarlet—dark-leaved evergreens, sweet-smelling lemon-leaves, and every hothouse shrub that could be collected. From every bracket and pilaster in the room drooped trails of fairy-like creepers, from baskets of cyclamen, hyacinths and maidenhair. In the conservatory, lit only by a huge lamp swung from the roof, within a globe of blue crystal, the silvery plash and murmur of a fountain, set among banks of ferns and garlands of brilliant flowers, shed a refreshing coolness over the warm perfumed air; and on all sides, floating round the ballroom, toying with the refreshments, or dropped to rest among the leaves and flowers of the conservatory, jewels sparkled, and bright eyes shone, and clouds of tulle and areoplane—white and colored—floated like the mists of morning from forms as young and lithe as the immortal goddesses of old.

Mrs. de Ponsonby, leaning on the arm of Petre, glowed like an animated cabbage-rose.

Miss Marryatt, with every little bone in her neck and shoulders quivering skeleton-like through a veil of violet powder, pronounced it "too delicious. O, isn't it a divine ball, Mr. Philpots? and what a pity you can't dance! But you don't think it wrong of me, do you? O, do tell me."

Kate, in a plain white dress, chosen from her stores because it was "really quite fresh, only worn once for an hour," but equally lovely from its simplicity as from its freshness, a white dress looped with trails of real ivy green, and fresh with wood-

primroses in her bosom, and a wreath of ivy and primroses in her wavy hair, one pretty hand resting lovingly on her brother's arm, stood the centre of a group of admirers, all clamoring to put down their names upon her card, while she—smiling and flushed with honest childlike enjoyment, with lips apart and eyes beaming—granted or evaded their petitions, as caprice or kindness prompted, and stubbornly refused to give away one of the dances marked with a mysterious cross: "Dick's dances," she whispered to her mother. "He likes to dance with me, so I made him promise we should have those three."

Clive saw the animated group, and guessed, before he saw, who formed the centre. He had arrived late with his party, and having deposited Lady Vanborough on a sofa, and obtained the promise of a quadrille later, was sauntering across the room, when his glance fell on a gentleman standing by himself, and gazing with the half-curious half-dreamy look of a stranger to such things at the scene around him. Their eyes met in a sort of mutual start of recognition. The gentleman made a half-salutation, as uncertain whether he were right in claiming acquaintance or not, and Clive stopped.

"Mr. M'Kenzie, I think," he said, courteously enough. "I fancied I saw you at the 'Travellers' yesterday; and a mutual friend told me you had returned to pay England a visit."

"Yes, I came home three weeks ago. How different everything is!"

"I suppose so. By the way, this is rather a different scene to the one in which we last met."

"Among the White Mountains, was it not? I thought I knew your face, though till you spoke I did not remember the name. Yes, different, indeed!"

"I should not have fancied you a ball-going man."

"Neither am I. I believe that there is nothing now that I care less for in the lap of creation."

"And yet?" said Clive, smiling a little ironically.

"And yet I am at one! Exactly; but the simple reason is that a fellow-passenger of mine and her sister had an invitation, and wanted to come very much. They are foreigners; the matron is shy; the husband was ordered to Lisbon three days before; and if I had not consented to act escort in his place, the poor little women would have fancied they had missed a great pleasure. At present I fear they are finding it a great delusion; more especially as my dancing days are over."

"You are evidently a good Samaritan, Mr. McKenzie," said Clive, laughing, "and report has done you wrong. Your New York friends called you the woman-hater."

"My New York friends did me less and the fair sex more than justice. Man's hatred, Mr. Clive, is something too strong to be wasted on things so utterly weak as women."

They were standing in the embrasure of a window, the stranger a slightly-built man, with a skin evidently tanned by foreign suns, and eyes like those of a stag—large, dark, and blazing with passionate feeling and intelligence; perhaps the handsomest—certainly the most noticeable—man in the room; and Clive, in his colorless skin, big heavy limbs and irregular features, seeming to be placed beside him for a foil—some of the women thought so, at any rate; I don't suppose the idea would have occurred to a man.

Up in the further end of the long rooms, brilliantly lit by scores of gas-burners, reflected from flashing jewels and glittering mirrors, the band was playing the "Tournez Waltz" from *Madame Angot*. The tender minor key of the melody floated dreamily over the buzz of voices, and all around close-linked couples waved and swayed, and turned, in languid rhythm to the soft slow rippling of the music.

"It reminds me of the Spanish dances in South America, only that they are still prettier, and less monotonous," said Dallas McKenzie. "Is it believable that any composer has succeeded in introducing an air which compels Englishwomen to dance as quietly as their Southern sisters?"

"You forget the unspeakable charm of anything novel in this used-up nineteenth century," said Clive, laughing. "To dance slowly and gracefully, in place of rushing

round a room in furious circles, like an insane humming-top, tearing your neighbors' dresses, and reducing a lady-like girl to the appearance of an ill-used rag doll, is a new sensation, and therefore likely to take until some one invents another. Probably it will be the exact contrary. '*Les extremes se touchent*,' you know, in London particularly."

"I noticed Mrs. de Ponsonby put 'Tournez Waltz' in the corner of her card, and couldn't guess what it meant."

"Yes, and a wise idea it was. Who can guess how many extra guests she obtained by that simple device? By the way, don't you think the women grow more insane in the way of dress every year? Look at that one in flame-color, with peacock-feather trimming."

"Ay; she reminds me of some tropical bird I have seen. What a contrast to that pretty little girl in white, with primroses in her hair!"

"Which? There are so many," but Clive's face changed—one would think he knew.

"That one standing beside the handsome lady in black velvet. I have noticed her once or twice. It is such a frank honest face; and the eyes seem perfectly to beam with innocent happiness. Don't you see her? She is the simplest dressed girl in the room, and to my mind the most charming."

"Yes, I see her," Clive said, a queer sort of reluctance in his tone.

"And do you know who she is? I think I saw you talking to her chaperone."

"Yes"—with equal reluctance—"a Miss Bellew. I must leave you now. I am engaged for this dance." And Mr. McKenzie was left alone.

Ten minutes later, when the dance was over, Clive found himself at Kate's side.

"I have not had time to speak to you yet," he said, in the short manner he always used to her. "You were dancing when I first saw your mother."

"Yes, with Dick. I always make Dick dance the first with me, unless he is engaged for it; he dances so well. But, Mr. Clive, I am very glad you have come up. I was really wishing to see you."

"Were you? Thank you," said Clive, his grave face lightening under the cordial tone.

"Yes; I wanted to ask you—Where is he now? O, there, under that archway.

Who is that gentleman you were talking to during the 'Tournez?'"

"Which gentleman?" Clive was certainly very stupid this evening, and the light had gone out of his face again.

"Why, you were only talking to one," Kate answered somewhat quickly. "I was looking at you both all the time, and he is the handsomest man in the room. I never saw such wonderful eyes; they are just like lamps. Who is he? Every one is asking, and no one seems to know."

"Every one is easily excited," said Clive, dryly. "If you mean that gentleman, under the arch there, he is a Mr. M'Kenzie."

"They say he has only just come to London. Is it the one you were speaking of?"

"Was I speaking of one?"

"Why, of course you were!" cried Kate, a little impatiently. "You said he never went into society."

"Then I must have been wrong—judging from appearances, at least."

"You know what I mean—that he *used* not to go into society when you knew him. Mamma and I have been watching him with interest, and have decided, first, that the trouble you spoke of is still written in his face; and secondly, that he is quite the most distinguished-looking man in the room. If he dances well, I shall not be satisfied till he is introduced to me."

"I do not think he dances at all; and I am not sure that you would very much care to know him, distinguished as he looks," Clive said, a little spitefully.

Lady Margaret's maternal solicitude took fire at once.

"My dear Katie, how imprudent you are! and in such a very mixed assemblage, too. You must be more thoughtful; and really, I think Mrs. de Ponsonby should be careful what sort of people—"

"I beg your pardon," Clive interrupted, with some annoyance. "You misunderstand me. Mr. M'Kenzie is, as far as I know, as much a gentleman as I am, and comes of a good family. I only meant—"

"Mr. Clive only meant to set me right, as usual, mamma," said Kate, flushing hotly. Clive bowed.

"Thanks for the amiable motives with which you credit me, Miss Bellew. I—"

"Quarrelling as usual, you two!" said Dick, coming up. "'Let dogs delight to bark and bite' ought to be put up on both your tombstones. Katie, my child, why aren't you dancing?"

"I came to remind your sister that she had promised this dance to me," said Clive, "but as I have had the misfortune to offend her, I suppose she will hardly care to keep her engagement."

"Nonsense, my good fellow! Kate is not such a vixen as that—are you, Kitty, *mamma*?"

"I am sure I don't know what I am," said Kate, glancing resentfully at Clive. "I am quite ready to dance with Mr. Clive when he wishes it."

Clive offered her his arm instantly, and without a word. If she had expected him to be magnanimous she was disappointed, and for the first few turns the little wrist he held was throbbing with indignation, and he could almost feel the angry beating of the heart so near his arm. It softened down gradually, and the red flush died out of her cheeks beneath another spell than words.

He had not spoken, but between really good dancers there is a sort of natural affinity. You can hardly move limbs and body in perfect dual time and melody without some sort of sympathy, however imperfect, exercising its soothing influence over the mind as well.

Before they had gone once round the room, Kate realized the fact that she had never danced with any one before whose step suited her so exactly; and she was almost angry with herself for feeling a shade of regret, when he stopped at the entrance to the conservatory and asked if she were tired.

"No, not at all," she answered, trying to speak as grimly, not as she felt, but as she felt she *ought* to feel towards such an unpleasant person. He looked down on her half sadly half smiling.

"Miss Bellew, are we never to be friends? I did not mean to offend you just now. Will you not forgive me?"

"I don't think you care about my forgiveness, or my friendship either," said Kate, willfully. "You do offend me. I am not going to pretend you don't. I suppose I am not used to being snubbed by gentlemen—or ladies either" (this as an after-thought), "and I don't like it."

"I never intended to snub you."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Clive, I think you did, though you may not have intended me to resent it. I don't know in what way you usually speak to your lady acquaintances, but I can assure you your manner to

me is not at all pleasant; and I do not like it."

"I have begged your pardon," he said, his voice as hard as his eyes were keen and searching, "I can do no more. You are utterly and entirely unjust to me, but that is no matter. You could not understand it if it were explained to you."

"If I were unjust it would matter very much—to me," said Kate, "but I don't think I am. Just now, for instance—"

"Yes, just now. You wished to know a person, an utter stranger to you, simply because he had beautiful eyes—'like lamps,' didn't you say?—and if you had been my sister, I should have said just—but what does it matter? I suppose I took a liberty in saying anything. At any rate you think so."

"Yes, I did think so," said Kate, uncomplainingly honest. "But if you did not mean it, there is an end of the subject. I wish" (with a little sigh) "that we could have been friends, but I think that is quite out of the question. We should never agree on any subject."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

He made no answer, only put his arm round her waist and whirled her off again. His heart was beating most quickly now, but Kate did not guess it. Only at the end of the room she looked up naively into a very stern pale face, and said, with her own saucy coaxing smile:

"I was quite wrong. We shon'd agree in one thing: you dance better than almost any one I know— except Dick."

"Then at least you will not refuse to dance with me," cried Clive, and carried her off her feet again nothing loth.

"They are the best matched couple in the room," said Mrs. de Ponsonby to the gentleman she was conversing with, and putting up her gold eyeglass as the couple flew past her; "Kate Bellew is wild about dancing."

"She is lovely enough to make young men wild about dancing with her," said M'Kenzie, warmly. "Will you introduce me when it is over?"

"My dear Mr. M'Kenzie! you, a world-wide traveller, so easily subjugated!"

"In what does subjugation consist?" said the gentleman, good-humoredly—"liking to talk to a fresh, innocent-looking little girl, in the pause between two of her dances?"

You have no pity on us middle-aged non-dancing men, Mrs. de Ponsonby, or you would not condemn us to silent contemplation of countless twinkling toes for a whole evening."

"Well, beware, that is all. Miss Bellew is a terrible little flirt."

"Is she? Poor little girl!" he said, smiling sadly. "I am sorry. However, she looks too young to have done much harm yet; and as, fortunately, it would be out of the question with me, I may do some good in standing between her and one of her victims for a few minutes."

"Ah! I see you feel you are invulnerable. Well, I should hope so, for the credit of your taste."

And, accordingly, Kate had hardly been returned to her mother's side, before she heard some one being introduced to her mother and herself, and saw Lady Margaret bowing to the dark handsome stranger, with the "lamplike" eyes, about whom she and Clive had quarrelled. With an involuntary impulse of mischief she looked up smiling, half consciously half triumphantly, at Clive; but he was already turning away; and though during the evening she remembered him, and glanced round for him more than once, he appeared no more. Truth to say, he had seen Mrs. de Ponsonby approaching with her convoy; had caught Kate's dimpling flush of saucy pleasure; and, bitterly vexed, for reasons best known to himself, had left the room at once.

Why he should care so much he could hardly tell himself. It is true he knew something about Dallas M'Kenzie's past life—something which, if true, would make him shrink from seeing that gentleman, however estimable in other ways, an intimate friend of any woman dear to him. But was Kate Bellew dear to him? Was she not, on the contrary, rather obnoxious than otherwise—a young woman with whom, as she said herself, he could never agree on any one subject? Yet why, on the other hand, should he let her annoy him? Why should they be always meeting and always fighting, when by simply staying away from the house he could devote himself to sweeter and gentler maidens, at whose words and deeds he need not be forever carping? Why?

Well, he told himself that he did not care about any other girls. They did not inter-

est him—their very sameness, even their outward faultlessness, palled on him. They were all so deadlily alike, so thickly glazed with the stereotyped varnish of society, that there was no getting at the real living woman within them. But Kate was *all* life; not mere wax-doll existence, but keen eloquent, faulty life. You had no time to think of what qualities were hidden within her, because so much was shown outside. She was like a varied and picturesque landscape—all hills and valleys, foaming streams and sheltered woods. You never thought what it might be beneath, or whether mines of gold or silver were hidden under that luxuriant veil. Occupied with the infinite variety of the surface, you took for granted the buried riches within; but perhaps there was nothing within, nothing but surface in her nature. He could not tell. Lawyer as he was, all he knew as yet was that that surface was such a mass of inconsistencies—some right, some wrong, some lovable and some reprehensible—that it took up all his thoughts, to the exclusion of every one else. He told himself that he was impatient with her because she was so wrong-headed, so thoughtless and inconsistent. But if she had been a perfectly right-minded, prudent and consistent woman, I doubt very much whether he would have given her a second thought. He told himself, too, that he was very angry with her for “not doing justice to herself;” but why should he care whether she were just to herself or not? What was she to him but Dick Bellew’s sister? only—though he had taken a kindly interest in Dick, as a young man and distant connection, strangely reminding him of his dead brother, and going to destruction as that brother had gone—his interest had been doubled and intensified ever since he had known Dick’s family. The fact was, he was inconsistent himself; and not being willing to admit as much, tried to compress the facts into theories, instead of enlarging his theories to hold the facts. He was a man of ultra-dogmatic theories and rigidly uncompromising opinions; and both his theories as to womankind in general, and opinions of women in particular, were most sharply marked out, and laid down for the guidance of his life.

The pity was that, this being so, he did not let them guide him, but departed from them forthwith, and then irked at the woman for making him turn out of his narrow

road, instead of at himself for turning out of it.

His theory of women, for instance, was that they were to be low-voiced and mild-eyed, imbued with unruffled dignity, holy simplicity, and speaking only with sweet propriety and gracious gentleness. A very fair picture, as any one will allow, and nobody could quarrel with him for making up his mind never to care for any woman who was not formed after such a type in all and every particular; but Kate was the very opposite of it, and yet he did care for her a great deal more than was compatible with his own comfort; almost as much as for Mrs. Grey, who, to all appearance at any rate, was the very embodiment of his own ideal. He admired Mrs. Grey the most; he looked up to her, and liked her with a liking which was strengthened by esteem. He wished with all his heart that Kate resembled her, and was decidedly annoyed with the young lady for being unlike her; but the very fact of his anger proved that she was something more to him than others; for had Mrs. Grey treated him one-half as coldly, or departed a tenth part as much from his ideal, he would have ceased to seek her society, or trouble himself about her interests. The fact was that Kate had cast a spell over him; and instead of yielding to it, and acknowledging that there might be other types of equal excellence though differing from his own, he chafed against the fascination, and felt bitterly towards the fairy who had woven it.

CHAPTER XII.

BEE VANDOROUGH.

“IN good time, Miss Katie Bellew! Walk in straight and make confession. I thought you had given me up, you fickle little sinner.”

It was Lady Vanborough, or Bee Vanborough, as her friends called her, who was speaking; a woman of middle height, dark and good-looking; but already, at eight-and-twenty, showing a tendency to coarseness, a color unlovely from the depth of its carnations, and a figure rapidly losing grace in flesh, which added at least ten years to her apparent age; a woman who enjoyed her pint of porter at luncheon as much as she did a new opera, and her champagne and port at dinner as much as Lord Lovegoats

did his; who spoke succulently of certain pates and entremets, and recommended choice varieties of sauces to you with an appreciative gusto which would have convinced the most skeptical of her own enjoyment thereof; a very jolly woman, a very likable one, good-hearted and good-tempered, detesting sentiment, loathing poetry, clever above mediocrity, plain in speech almost to insultiveness, independent as the wind, courageous as a dragoon, and scorning utterly dependence and cowardice in others; a woman who would fight another woman's battles to the death if she cared for her; and lash vindictively a third who, for some occult reason, had not happened to take her fancy; in whom a certain set of ladies and most men of the world delighted; whose house was one of the pleasantest in London; whose cavalier treatment was good-humoredly submitted to; and yet who had a perfect army of faults and eccentricities; and notably among the former, one of which no one would ever have accused her, and she herself would have indignantly repudiated. Lady Bee cared so little for the opinions of society that she would come down stairs whistling, in a loud tone, bars of favorite songs, and a total disregard of the aristocratic ears listening to her from the drawing-room; and her friends said, "So like Bee Vanborough!—unconventional and easy to a fault; wouldn't alter one of her funny little home habits for the grandest bashaw living." But I see no easiness in a habit put on only to startle the grand bashaws, and not indulged in at all in her home privacy. Bee Vanborough never thought of whistling, at schoolboy pitch, about the house when she was alone. It was the same with her conversation.

On the present occasion, Lady Bee was standing at the door of her boudoir, a pretty little place, chiefly composed of sea-green silk, point-lace, old china, and quaint bric-a-brac, with a couple of riding-whips and a fox's brush, supporting an original Murillo, over the chimney-piece, a pair of boxing-gloves and a homœopathic medicine chest in a corner, a case of silver-mounted pistols, one loaded, *open* on the console table.

"Now, come and make confession," she said, holding out her hand to Kate.

"What am I to confess, Bee?" said Kate, taking the two large, white, jewelled hands in hers. "It is not more than a fortnight since I came to see you."

"And twice in that fortnight I've seen a bay horse in the Row alongside of yours; and once I have dined with you, and found the legs that bestrode that bay ambling down to dinner with you. Who is he?"

"I suppose you mean—" began Katie.

"Katie, don't sham. You know whom I mean.—Doesn't she, my small fatty?" (taking up Dottie, who had accompanied her sister, and kissing her). "You know who is Katie's new friend, don't you?"

"Es," said Dottie, promptly; "Misser C'ive. Me lites him so much. Him dave me a doll."

"You are a worse humbug than your sister. Kate, how can you teach her to be such an abominable deceiver? Of course I don't mean Bernard Clive, *his* day is over, but—"

"Mr. M'Kenzie, I suppose," said Kate, quietly; "I was going to say his name, if you had let me answer instead of Dottie."

"And now tell me who he is."

"I thought you wanted to know his name."

"No, my child, I knew that already; but *who* is he?"

"A gentleman."

"Kate, don't try to be terse; it's not in your line; besides, it betrays you. I begin now to believe in some of Mrs. De Ponsonby's gossip."

"You didn't before then? Well, Bee, without knowing it I can tell you one thing for yourself; first thoughts are truest with women."

"Sounds like one of Bernard Clive's sayings—is it? Kate, you're an awful flirt."

"A *flirt*!" cried Kate, opening her big eyes with injured indignation. "Well, I did not think *you* would call me that; and with Mr. Clive, too, whom I would not flirt with to save my—Why, we—we *hate* one another. I don't know any one I dislike so heartily."

"Strong language, Kate!" said Lady Bee, laughing, provokingly, as she drew her big firm fingers through the shining gold of Dottie's loose locks. "And does she hate and detest Mr. M'Kenzie as well, Fatima?"

"Katie lites Misser M'Kenzie; Eve says so. Eve an' me lites Misser C'ive," Dottie answered, volubly. "Him 'colds Katie, Eve says."

"Upon my word, young woman, you seem to be up in the domestic politics," laughed Lady Bee. "Scolds you, eh, Kate?"

"It is quite true," said Kate, scorning to deny, though her cheeks grew scarlet; "and remembering my meekness under scoldings at school, you may guess how fond I am of Mr. Clive. If Dick did not like him, I would never have let mamma ask him to the house; but I think Dick and he do care for one another."

"And Dick's tastes are still A 1?"

"Dick's tastes will always be A 1, as you call it, Bee," said Kate, good-humoredly. "Now, don't laugh at me; you've got no brother, and you don't understand Dick, or you would know what an immense blessing it is to have him for one."

"Kate, you're a good little thing," said Lady Vanborough, meditatively.

"What! for loving Dick?" cried Kate, with one of her merry peals of laughter. "If one only requires that for canonization, it is easy to be a saint. I only wish he were a little older; old enough for you now, Bee—"

"Thank you for nothing," exclaimed her friend, with a most unaffected expression of horror. "I'm not proud, but I hope—There, I'm not going to make you angry, Katie."

"I hope not," said Kate, simply, "because I love you also, and I should be very angry with any one who sneered at me for doing so."

This was a rebuke, and Bee Vanborough took it for one, declaring herself annihilated, and in need of immediate sherry and bitters to support her under her load of shame, with a variety of absurd gestures which made Dottie's blue eyes round with wonder, and Kate's cheeks rosy with confusion, but which did not prevent her from giving the latter an affectionate kiss the next moment, and, telling her she was a "dear good little girl, and then she liked her better for her folly than other people for their wisdom." Kate grew redder still at this, and felt inclined to argue out the subject; but Bee Vanborough was a nasty person to tackle in an argument; and, afraid that she might injure her hero more than exalt him, Kate chose the better part of valor, and held her tongue. Said Bee:

"Seriously, Kittle, I am glad Dick's friend doesn't rank with Dick in your affections; for I am afraid it would be 'love's labor lost.'"

"Bee dear," said Kate, wistfully, "Dottie can understand; and even if she couldn't,

I hate that kind of talk—almost as much" (with a laugh) "as I hate its present subject."

"Spare your hatred, my child, for it won't lacerate his heart. That is otherwise disposed of."

"His heart!" (very scornfully), "I did not know he had such a thing. I never saw such a cold insensible man in my life. I don't think he has any warm feelings in him—except for a dead brother; I forgot that. He did speak of him once as if he loved him—and then there's Dick, and perhaps mamma, he likes."

"And? Go on, Katie, that is three, and I can tell you a fourth."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Gray."

"Mrs. — Not your companion surely, Bee! Why, I haven't seen her yet."

"And you won't now, because she is out; and she is very shy of seeing visitors into the bargain; but did not you know that Bernard Clive recommended her to me?"

"Mr. Clive! No," said Kate, with wide-open eyes; and then there flashed back upon her mind the evening when Clive had sounded her for her opinion of Lady Vanborough; and that subsequent one when the new companion's appearance had been the subject of conversation, Clive listening with apparent indifference till he threw in that casual word which damped Dick's ardor to see Lady Bee's phoenix. Looking back on it Kate felt rather warm. He might have said something; but—O, it was just like him.

"O yes! he recommended her to me," said Lady Vanborough, "and most earnestly too; told me that she had been living with his people, and showed me letters from his father and a Canon Digby speaking of her in the highest terms. I assure you he quite took me into his confidence. (Fancy Bernard Clive confidential!) and was quite eloquent on the subject; but love makes all men alike; and I must say he didn't give her more than her due. She is wonderfully nice; only she makes one so awfully afraid of her—I declare I feel quite on my P's and Q's when she's in the room."

"She must be wonderful indeed!" cried Kate, laughing heartily at the idea of any one—a companion especially—keeping Lady Bee in check. "Well, I think better of Mr. Clive if he is capable of really loving any one, however unsuitable; and of course she

must be a paragon of perfection for him to approve her."

"Kate, that is feminine spite."

"Yes, it is," owned Kate, after one little gasp at the accusation; "only I can't fancy him deigning to like any one the least imperfect or—"

"Why, bless my heart!" broke in Bee Vanborough, nearly tossing Dottie off her knee in the energy of the moment, "didn't you say he liked Dick?—Good gracious! I am forgetting again" as a pair of reproachful brown eyes met hers full—"I beg pardon. Go on."

"I was only going to say that, as he is so much with us at present, I think he need not have been so close—so—Why, I call it almost deceitful;" and Kate narrated the little incident aforementioned in a tone of indignation which sent Lady Vanborough into fits of laughing.

"My dearest Kitty, don't you know that it is a specialty of lawyers to draw you out without committing themselves? But I wonder you didn't guess anything from the way in which he dashed cold water on Dick's little desires. Not that I would have let the young man come here to look at my property. I dare say he was longing to punch your brother's head. It seems that Mrs. Gray's husband, of whom she was devotedly fond, left her very badly off, poor thing! (an unpardonable sin in husbands, in my opinion; but that's not to the point), and that she lived with a spinster cousin, possessed of a nice little annuity, in a small cottage belonging to the Rev. Mr. Clive, Bernard's father. This cottage is almost attached to the rectory; and she won all hearts at the latter place in a jiffy, most particularly that of Bernard's brother, who lives at home as his father's curate. The Clives insisted on her coming to the rectory and staying with them. She wanted (she is disgustingly proud, you know,) to get a situation as companion or housekeeper at some country house at once; but naturally Mr. Philip Clive wouldn't hear of that, and egged on the others to persuade her into remaining with them, for a time at least. The rector is blind, you know, and Mrs. Gray used to read and write for him, so that the widowed daughter, who likes society, was left more free for it; and then she worked for and visited the poor for Mr. Philip, and taught the little girl, and sang for Bernard when he came down—in fact,

became the most useful member of the family (you should see what a lot of things she does for me, and all with such a stately sort of sweetness), and was looked on as quite one of them, until the curate went and proposed. Bernard was in London—he only runs down for flying visits to Woodleigh—and Mr. Philip took advantage of the coast being clear to try his luck and—*fail!*"

"She preferred the other, then?" said Kate, interested, as all girls are, in a love-story. "How disagreeable the brother must be!"

"That is a matter of taste, my child. I like Bernard Clive. At any rate, Philip was refused, and wouldn't—positively wouldn't—take his refusal; went half crazy on the subject, declaring he would follow her everywhere when she would leave Woodleigh unless he desisted, and persecuting her with tears, threats and entreaties, till at last she fairly bolted—chose a day when he had gone to preach a charity sermon at the nearest town, and the sister—who, oddly enough, rather took his part—was somewhere else, and quietly walked off with her few possessions, bidding good-by to the rector at the last moment and without saying where she was going, and merely leaving a very grateful farewell letter for the others. Young Clive traced her easily to a town about five miles off, and there lost the clue, and has never regained it (I believe those passionate entreaties which appear addressed to 'A. G., Myrtles,' in the second column of the Times every now and then, are from him), and I dare say he would be ready to kill Bernard if he knew that gentleman was acquainted with her whereabouts—"

"But he will have to know some day," broke in Kate. "I do not like the brother, Bee. If she prefers Bernard, he ought to have yielded directly. Persecuting a woman is not love. It is not even manly. I am vexed with Mr. Clive, too. Seeing that his brother, who knew her first, loved her so passionately, he ought to have kept out of her way. He ought never even to have let her love him. I would not come between Eve and any one she cared for. Bee, it is very unkind of you to laugh at me. You have no brothers and sisters, so you do not know. They are not a nice family. I would not like to be one of them."

"'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said," sang Lady Bee, in her full clear voice, and

with a most provoking accent. "Kate, your notions are beautifully fresh and green; but 'wait a wee,' as the Scotch say. They won't wash. No man living, if he honestly loves a woman, and is loved by her, will give her up, because his brother happens to have taken a mad fancy for her."

"Not unless he should chance to love his brother more than the woman, I suppose?" said Kate. "I dare say you are right, Bee. I don't profess to know much about such things yet; but still, I don't think any the better of Mr. Clive for not openly claiming her, instead of hiding it up. I can't bear secrets—secrets among families especially. He ought to marry her at once if he is going to do it at all, and then she would be protected from every one. I can't think why he doesn't, or why he lets her be a companion."

"I expect she has some voice in that matter, my dear. She *says* she won't marry at all."

"But I don't understand. I thought you implied they were engaged."

"Not publicly. O no! I don't think it has come to that; but they make very little concealment of their regard for one another; and I expect he is pretty sure of his success. Indeed, why otherwise should she have sent for him when she fled from Philip, and made him her confidant and *cavalier servant*? But some widows, you know, like holding out and protesting unalterable devotion to the dear departed, till the very day they are led to the altar by the dear *secundus*."

"Then it is very silly of them," said Kate, with youthful severity, "and I don't think much of your beautiful heroine for giving all this useless pain and trouble for the sake of such a folly. If I loved any one, and he asked me to marry him, I should say, 'Yes, please,' at once, and jump for joy when he was gone. Why don't you speak to her, Bee, and tell her—"

"Speak to her!" cried Bee Vanborough, again subjecting Dottie to the shuttlecock process, until that much-enduring little damsel looked as if she were experiencing a storm at sea. "But you haven't seen Averil Gray, or you wouldn't ask that question. Why, I dare not *think* of speaking to her about her private affairs unless she introduced them. She's the most reserved and the most companionable woman you ever met—will talk of Woodleigh, the rec-

tor, and all of them, for an hour, without ever giving you an idea of the young man's admiration of herself; and will hardly ever allude to the husband she adored, though I'm sure I'm always telling her of poor dear Vanborough—when I can think of anything about him to tell her, at least. No; we are going off on a little quiet trip to Norway in the summer, and I shouldn't be surprised if we met Bernard Clive somewhere among the woods and fjords. In that case of course I shall ask him to join us. Mrs. Gray will say nothing, and look neutrally remonstrating; and the end of it will be that just as I've grown not to know what to do without her, she will calmly tell me she is going to be married next week, and I shall have to give them a wedding-breakfast, and say, 'B-b bless you, my children,' with the best grace I can."

"Me's had my betfast an' my dinner, too, me's had," said Dottie, suddenly growing tired of playing audience and striking into the dialogue. "Me has had an' milt for my betfast, an' nurae puts sudar in when me's dood—bwown sudar. Does eo lite bwown sudar?"

"Better than any other delicacy in the world," Lady Vanborough answered, clasping her hands in the fervor of her acquiescence. "Hark! isn't that the bell? Now commence my visitors and my visitors' twaddle. Well, Kate, what are you fidgeting for?"

"I was looking to see whether Dick was coming," said Kate, coming back from an excursion to the window. "He promised to call for me at a quarter past three; and I came early that I might have a talk with you before your visitors came."

Lady Vanborough laughed.

"The last thing that most of my visitors desire! I have an 'at home' to-day, and they come to it; but they don't want to see me, and I don't want to see them. Mrs. A comes that she may say, 'I always go to Lady Vanborough's Fridays.' It's the handle she cares about, not the name or the person. Mrs. B, because I can get hold of professional singers, and she likes hearing good music gratis. Miss C, to meet Mr. D; and Mr. D to meet Miss C. It's not for me, or my society, that my house gets filled so full that—Ah! Mrs. Delamayne, how d'you do? How is your sister? Last time I saw her she was flirting so abominably on Lady Peacock's stairs with young Dalziel

that—Mr. de Posonby, how do *you* do? When are you going to come of age again, and collect another delightful crowd, to dance with each other and make believe it is for your sake?—Mrs. Van Doorn, you don't mean to say you've come again without your husband, when you know I only asked you on his account!—How are you Mr. Bellew? Come for your sister? O, nonsense! I'm not going to let her go. I like her a great deal better than I do you."

"But I must go now," said Kate, coming forward to her brother's rescue. (He was not fond of Lady Vanborough's jokes.) "I promised mamma to be back by half-past three. Eve is very unwell. That is why I brought Dottie out, for we don't know if she is sickening for anything; and Miss Smith left yesterday for the holidays; so good-by."

"Good-by, my child," said Bee, kissing her. "You've meanly escaped telling me anything about—you know who. Never mind, if Eve is going to have the smallpox, or anything, you'll have to come here out of the way, and I shall hear all about it.—Mr. Bellew, please tell your friend Clive that now his recess has come he has no excuse for avoiding my Fridays. I haven't got the plague."

And then at last the young Bellews got away, and found themselves on the stairs. A tall lady in black was coming up at the same time, and put out a quick kindly hand to save Dottie from stumbling.

"Dat's a pwetty lady," said Dottie, with infantine frankness, and tugging at Kate's hand to attract her attention; and Kate, glancing upwards with a smile of thanks, looked admiringly into one of the fairest and noblest faces she had ever seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PRIVATE INTERVIEW.

"It must have been the companion," said Kate, "as they turned into the street, where a bright sun and strong breeze caught little Dottie's hair, and blew it about like sparks of gold. Dick had to put a hand to his hat before answering.

"What companion? O, Bee Vanborough's! Nonsense! Clive said she was as ugly as sin. By the way, Kittie, I can't think how you, who are sensible enough in general, can put up with a woman like that.

I never heard such a confounded clack in all my life. I do believe she thinks of all the rudest things beforehand that she can say, and then says them."

It seemed poor Kate's fate to hear her favorites abusing one another; and I fear Bee would hardly have been satisfied with her championship in this case; for she only gave a little sigh, and said, resignedly:

"She does not mean it, Dick; it's only her way."

"Then I wish she'd amend her ways," said Dick, petulantly. "Look here, what have we got this young one with us for? I have got a card for the private view of —'s Academy pictures; and I thought you would like to go with me; but I'm not going to drag a parcel of children at my heels."

"Poor little parcel!" said Kate, looking down with a merry laugh at the tiny woman trotting along at her side, in happy unconsciousness of her brother's objection to her presence. "I'm afraid I must take her home now, anyhow, or she'll be tired. Couldn't we go to-morrow?"

"No, he sends it in to-morrow. Well, we shall have to go out again after leaving the little bother at home. I mustn't be later than four, or M'Kenzie will think I'm not coming."

"O, it is he!" said Kate, with a sudden recollection of having expressed her admiration of —'s pictures to Mr. M'Kenzie a few days previously. "How very kind he is! I hope mamma will not want me."

Mamma did not. When did Lady Margaret want one of her children, unless that one desired to be with her? Their pleasure was her law; and just now she was looking anxious and pre-occupied.

"I'm afraid Eve is going to be seriously ill; her throat is so sore, and she is terribly feverish. No, my love, you can be no good. She can't bear any one in the room; and I would rather not have you in the way till I know what it is. Go with Dick, by all means; he will be out of mischief then;" and with a heavy sigh, and her cap dangling on one side of her head, Lady Margaret went away again to her sick child. Kate came down stairs looking depressed.

"I hope Eve is not going to be really ill," she said, with a very dolorous face, as Dick helped her into the hansom which was waiting at the door; and her brother pooh-poohed the notion, reminding her that Eve was always ailing.

"Those pecky people always make a great deal more fuss than is necessary. Why, I have got a thundering headache at this moment, only I don't say anything about it."

This, of course, was meant to be unanswerable; so, beyond an expression of pity for the headache, Kate said nothing; but, all the same, her mind would revert to Eve, and remained there until the hansom drew up with a jerk in front of a low wall with a door in it, and straggling yellow-blossomed creepers hanging over the top on to the outside: a wall which shut in one of those small quaint-looking old houses in faded-red brick, which still exist in Kensington; and outside which a gentleman was pacing to and fro as if waiting for some one.

It was Mr. McKenzie, and as he came forward with a bright pleased smile on his dark face, Kate forgot about the home anxieties. She was very young, you see, only nineteen; and to her mind this stranger had even a sweeter face than Dick's (!) [N.B.—I mention this comparison to show you that Kate's ideas of beauty were not always founded on strictly artistic principles. Yet it was true that just now that animated Southern face looked wonderfully handsome, relieved against the mingled reds and ochres of the old wall, with its dainty tracing of green leafage hanging over it, and the blue sky drifted with white above.]

The very street was washed clean by recent rains, and dried to a country whiteness in the fresh spring breeze; and in the neighboring gardens the may was all breaking into white and rosy blossom. In another week, and while its country sisters were as yet barely budded with green, it would be so snowed over with perfumed color, that the vivid emerald of the leaves, now so beautiful, would be lost altogether.

"What a lovely day?" Mr. McKenzie said, as he assisted Kate to alight. "Certainly, even London is beautiful in some seasons. No, you have not kept me waiting. I gave your brother the ticket in case I should arrive before or after you; but the day is too fine to be wasted indoors. Kind of me! How can you say so? It was a kindness to myself; for I so seldom meet with any one who really and heartily cares for art as I do myself; and you seem to enjoy it even more keenly. I think"—with a sigh and a look half kind half curious—"you enjoy everything. It is very pleasant."

"I do," said Kate; "I enjoy things dread-

fully. Don't you?"—a pitiful appreciation in her tone of the sadness in his.

"Not now. I did once; but I seem to have used up enjoyment, and pain too, since then. The greatest pleasure I have now"—and his smile was very pleasant as he said it—"is to do what I can in contributing to the enjoyment of those young enough to take it, and blossom brightly over it as you do—and as that may tree does in the sunshine. No sun has much effect on that withered sycamore tree in the corner, you see; and yet I suppose even it has been green and pleasant in its day."

Kate did not think Mr. McKenzie looked much like a withered sycamore; yet she felt sorry for him somehow. It was not only the sad tone in his voice, but he looked as though the storms had come into his life and laid it bare at some time or another. All the more reason, she thought, for appreciating the pleasant brightness and verdure which remained. He was rather fond of talking in allegories, and she liked it. You would not have thought there was an ounce of poetry in Kate's whole nature; but there was, although it was hidden rather deep, and did not often rise to the surface. Indeed, she was rather ashamed of it herself; and certain old copy-books and untidy quires of paper filled with blotted verses, and wonderfully youthful romances, were stowed snugly away in a boot-closet in her room, where no eye but her own and Dick's had ever seen them: not his since he had grown up and become a man. Unpublished contributions to the over-published world of literature they were, which she often glanced lovingly over even now; and now and then added to by a few lines, generally written when she was either out of spirits or too excited for prose: verses which would have made you die with laughter to read; only Kate took very good care no one should read them. Mr. McKenzie, she thought, talked as if he could write poetry too—good poetry—and yet would not despise those blurred over-exalted effusions of hers in the boot-closet. They were her pet and only secret; and yet, though she had known this stranger only one fortnight, she felt as if she minded his discovering them less than any of her oldest friends.

Just now he was putting her in the best place for seeing one of the principal pictures to appear in that year's Academy; for a girl for a chair for her lest she should be tired;

and keeping close at her side, that he might tell her the names of the dozen or so of notorieties who had also got permission for a private view of the great work.

"That tall thin woman, with the dark intellectual face and graceful manner, is Miss Antonia S—, the American contralto; and that other dark, vivacious, flighty little woman is the popular novelist, whose last book I found on your table last Thursday. That eccentric, pre-Raphaelite-looking little creature, with the slashed gown, and flame-colored feathers round her head, is the wife of a water-color artist, and dresses after his mediæval conceptions. Don't you wonder she dare face the London *gamins* without getting hooted? And that pretty lady-like-looking girl is Miss C—, the principal actress at the 'Parnassus.'"

"You know every one," said Kate, whose eyes were eager with interest; "and yet you have been such a little while in London. I wonder how you manage it. We seem to be the only people who are nothing particular in the room. Do you know, it makes me feel terribly insignificant."

"Does it?" said M'Kenzie, smiling. "You look—but I am not going to tell you how you look; only old privileged friends may always speak truths. Look at this instead;" and he brought her a small vase full of feather-flowers most exquisitely made and grouped. Kate admired them. They were very curious.

"Too good to be put on the same table with this!" and he took up a glass containing a single freshly-plucked spray of acacia blossoms, white as snow and sweet as honey.

"O!" said Kate, and plunged her little nose delightedly into the flowers. "How sweet! how fresh!"

"So I think," said M'Kenzie, smiling still. "I prefer them. Things fresh and sweet are always better than rarities in my opinion."

Kate made no answer, but buried her nose the deeper, feeling angry with herself because her rebellious cheeks would give token that she understood. I think he saw the annoyance, but was not sure at whom it was directed. At any rate, he moved quietly away, and began talking to their host; and before he came back, Dick was at his sister's side, suggesting that they should go. Poor Dick! he soon got tired of pictures, or anything that was not exciting; and the actress, the only person present

whom he knew, was surrounded by a group of favored acquaintances, and merely honored him with the briefest of nods. Dick, who had seen her often before, and once or twice behind the scenes, was huffed, and carried off his sister before she felt at all inclined for a move.

Mr. M'Kenzie went with them, and a hansom being out of the question for three, they all walked home very contentedly; even Mr. Bellew recovering his good temper in the sweet air and sunshine. Kate thought Mr. M'Kenzie had never made himself so pleasant. Reverting from the feather-flowers to Mexico, he talked about his travels there, breaking off to tell of a bear fight in the Rocky Mountains, and one with robbers among the Californian diggings. He seemed to have been everywhere in the New World; and Kate listened with parted lips and radiant eyes, a very child in her pleasure at being "told a story." It was pleasant talking to such an eager listener, looking down now and then into the lifted rosy face, and provoking the little impetuous half-questions and broken comments; pleasant even to a man who tried to persuade himself that he had done with pleasure. Dallas M'Kenzie had known what love was in his younger life, and had repented him of the knowledge so bitterly that he had never thought even to like a girl heartily again; but he could not help liking Kate, and he acknowledged it.

A faint mist was rising, and behind it the sun, like a blood-red hand, pointed a fiery path between the trees in Hyde Park, and tinged the under side of the leaves and twigs with flame. Long streaks of violet cloud, lined with red, floated across the western sky. It was getting late, Kate thought, as she saw their shadows lengthy and crooked on the pavement before them.

They were just reaching the house, and a little chill ran through her; for the face of the page, who opened the door, was as long as a coffin.

Her voice grew quite faint with inward misgiving, as she asked M'Kenzie if he would come in, and there was such an anxious inquiry in her large eyes that Buttons answered as if addressed:

"Miss Eye is much worse, miss; very bad indeed; and the doctor's coming again in the evening."

And Kate had been enjoying herself! Poor girl! she staggered a little with the

shock, and her face grew so pale that Mr. McKenzie put out his hand, and took hers as if to support her.

"Do not look so alarmed," he said, kindly, almost as though he were speaking to a child; "it may only be a slight attack. The doctor will give a better report in the evening, and you mustn't lose heart before you hear it."

The friendly tone, the warm friendly clasp, brought back the blood again into her cheeks.

"Thank you," she said, gratefully, the ready tears starting to her eyes; "you are very kind. Will you come to-morrow and hear how she is?"

"I will come every day until you can give me good news, and that, I hope, won't be long," he answered, smiling; "only keep up your spirits now." And then he gave her fingers a final cordial squeeze and went away.

Dick had been speaking to the page, and now followed Kate up stairs with a very lugubrious face.

"I say, Kittie, Tom says it is scarlet fever. That's infectious, you know, and they say a fellow may have it any number of times—I wish to goodness I'd stayed at Oxford. It may be in the air even here. Look here, you know, I'm not going to stay in the house with anything catching."

"I will go to mamma and see," said Kate, gently. Were there times when even her love failed to bridge over the gulf of Dick's selfishness?

It was infectious—a particularly bad case of scarlet fever, the doctor said; and Lady Margaret—in an equal agony of alarm for the sick child above, and the well children below—forbade Kate all share in the nursing, and exiled all but herself and the nurse from the floor where Eve was invalided. The others were packed down stairs as they best could be, Dick having a bed made up in the schoolroom. It was not a very comfortable apartment, but being further from the disease than anywhere else—except the kitchen—he kindly refrained from grumbling more than a little. After all, it was only a temporary arrangement. The doctor himself recommended that all but the invalid and those in attendance on her should be sent out of the house as speedily as possible; and on the following day Lady Margaret, well soaked in camphorated spirits, but in a lamentably dishevelled condition

as to hair and attire, called Kate into her room to consult about the when and where of departure.

"But not me, mamma," said Kate, eagerly; "I have had it."

"My dear child, that is nothing. You might take it again."

"But, mamma, is it likely? and I am not a bit afraid, and could help you so much in nursing poor Evey. Do let me stay, mother dear. Bee Vanborough wrote to me to-day asking me to come to her, and bring Dottie, as Mrs. Grey is very fond of children; but I said 'No, I wouldn't leave you on any account.'"

"But you must leave me, Kate. The doctor says so. Don't give trouble about it, love," Lady Margaret said, wistfully; "I don't know whether I am standing on my head or heels, as it is; and if you were laid up too—but that is nonsense. You must all go away at once."

"Dick is going to Mr. Clive," said Kate. "He asked him at once; and Mr. McKenzie wants us to let him take George. He says he has lots of room for him, and is very fond of boys. Is it not kind of Mr. McKenzie, mamma?"

"It is kinder of Bernard Clive, who has only one room, and has offered that to Dick," said Lady Margaret, gravely. "Unfortunately, however, that is the very thing—Kate, would you think me very unkind—both of you, I mean—if I said, 'Don't go to Bee Vanborough or Bernard Clive?'"

"Why, mamma," said Kate, wondering, "I have already refused to go to Bee. I want to stay here."

"My love, you can't stay here. Pray do not say any more about that. If only for Dick's sake, I should want you to go away, so that he may not be alone. Kate, it will never do, his staying in London during the season. It is bad enough at home; but there in the Temple, within reach of every gayety and dissipation, it would never do. I have been racking my brain for the last week, to think of some plan for getting him out of London. Only the day before yesterday he came for more money, and I had given him ten pounds the week before. Where it had gone I don't know; the poor dear boy gets so cross if one asks him the least question. And then Uncle Theo is quite furious about his being here. He declares that the unfortunate child got himself rusticated on purpose to be up for the

whole season, and that unless I send him away at once he w-wont give you one bit of help or kindness in the future—none of you.”

Lady Margaret began to weep.

“Uncle Theo is so hard, so wickedly hard on poor Dick,” cried Kate, kneeling down by her mother and kissing her fondlingly. “He can’t understand him; and I don’t see what right he has to make you cry, and order us about. Help indeed! Let him not help,” cried the young lady with lofty independence, nestling her head on to her mother’s shoulder the while; “we can do without him.”

“Can we?” said Lady Margaret, laughing sadly. “I’m afraid, Kate, you’re rather mistaken. We should do very badly without your uncle’s help; and he is quite right. It is doing harm to Dick himself to keep him idling here. If we could only find some nice place where he could read! There is a village—”

“I don’t think he would like it, mamma,” Kate interrupted with a shake of the head, as if that settled the matter.

“Not alone, my love; but if you were to go too. The dear boy is very fond of you, you know; and listen, Katie. My maid’s sister lets lodgings in Combe Regis—did you ever hear of it?—a little village on the sea-coast, between Devonshire and Somerset. It is a lovely place, with good boating and fishing (only don’t get drowned)—beautiful walks; and the rooms vacant now, so that you could go at once.”

“Dick is fond of fishing—and boating,” Kate put in deliberately. “We might make him like it, mamma.”

“Thank you, love; and show him your uncle’s letter. He would not like his allowance cut off. It is hard to send you away just at the beginning of the season”—and Lady Margaret stroked her girl’s bright cheek fondly—“but you will go to please me, wont you?”

“The season might go to Jericho for all I care,” said Kate, ungracefully; “I would like to stay and nurse Eve; but, of course, if it will please you—”

“I could not send Madge and Dottie with Dick, even if he would take them,” replied Lady Margaret. “Of course you must go. My only difficulty now is about George. There are only two bedrooms in the cottage, and an attic, which will hold the maid and Dottie. One is large enough for you and

Madge; but Martin says the other is so small she is afraid Mr. Dick would not like to take—”

“O no,” said Kate, shaking her head even more decisively; “Dick wouldn’t stay a day unless he had a room to himself; but Mr. M’Kenzie is really anxious to have George. He said so, and I am sure he means what he says.”

Lady Margaret looked doubtful. Mr. M’Kenzie was very nice, and of course it was most kind; but they knew him so little. However, as there was no time to be lost, Kate had better write a pretty note to thank him, and accept the offer. “And then you had better write about the lodgings being ready for you to-morrow; and tell Bessie and Martin to pack your things.”

“If only I had not to go!” Katie said, her brown eyes filling. “I know I must; but O, it would be so dreadful if Eve were to get worse, and I be away or—”

“Don’t you think it is wiser not to fancy such things?” said Lady Margaret, fondly. “Katie, I wont have you kissing me in this way. I’m not sure that it’s safe at all. Go down and tell Dick about it now. Tell him he is *wanted* to take care of you all, and that you couldn’t go without him. He cannot refuse.”

He did not. Lady Margaret was right, although she spoke in a doubtful tone, and though he was by no means willing to leave London, and so savage on the subject that Kate was obliged to bring out Uncle Theo’s cruel letter as a last resource, whereupon Master Dick began to reconsider the matter; and finally, after much talking and disagreement, submitted.

“Wholly on the girls’ account,” he told Clive, taking a very high and magnanimous view of the matter. “My mother says she can’t send them to Devonshire unless I go to take care of them; and so of course I’ve had to agree. It’s a beastly bore, confound it all! Just at the beginning of the season too! But of course a fellow can’t refuse.”

“I should hope not,” said Clive, coolly. “Then you go to-day. Well, Dick, you couldn’t have a better place for studying.”

“O hang study! What’s the good of it? I shall never even get a second; and I don’t care about coming out with the ruck. I wouldn’t keep my name on the books another day if it were not for Uncle Theo. I suppose the old brute would stop my allowance directly if I left.”

"I am busy now," said Clive, striving to bury a large amount of disgust among the papers by which he was surrounded.

"You are always busy," retorted Dick, not taking the hint, but continuing to lounge against the mantel-piece. "I say, do you never stop that eternal treadmill of yours?"

"Not often," said Clive, dryly; "I tread mills for my living, remember."

He might have said, "for your living, remember," since it was he who had taken on him Dick's debt, and was now working harder than usual to get clear of it; but if a disagreeable, he was not an ungenerous man; and refrained from all such speech, going on with his writing instead.

Dick called him a "penurious old hunk," and began teasing him to pay them a visit at Combe Regis. He knew he should get bored to death there without a soul to speak to.

"Isn't your eldest sister going with you?" Clive ask d.

"Of course. Didn't I tell you I had to look after the girls?"

"Yes—but I fancied Miss Bellew might be remaining at home to help her mother with the nursing."

"Thank you!" cried Dick; "and I look after the young ones! Not quite such a fool!"

"I am really so busy now I must turn you out," said Clive; "but I will try and run down to Combe Regis while you are there, if you want me."

And then Dick did take his elbow off the mantel-piece, and reluctantly departed.

"I wonder if I shall knock that young fellow down some day?" thought the bar-rister as the door closed. "I've had five minds to do it this afternoon. Such an incarnation of self surely never lived before. And so she is running away from the infection too! I thought that family affection was strong enough in her to have kept her to nurse her sick sister. Probably, like her brother, she is only bemoaning her ill fate in missing the season. What a fool I am in troubling my head about them at all; and yet there are the makings of good in her, if one could only get at them. I believe any one she loved could do what he liked with her. Who's that? Didn't I tell you I was engaged? Why, Philip, what on earth has brought you up?"

CHAPTER XIV.

PHILIP'S INQUIRIES.

PHILIP CLIVE came in quickly, putting the boy, who had tried somewhat ineffectually to bar his entrance, on one side with one firm quick hand, and holding out the other to his brother, who grasped it warmly.

"What a time it is since I've seen you! and how ill you are looking, old fellow!" Bernard said, still holding his hand after the first exclamation of greeting; and then he looked searchingly into the face which bore so strong a family likeness to his own, but which had a haggard feverish look on it, plainly discernible in the pale yellow sunlight then streaming on it over the office blinds.

Bernard read the meaning there quickly enough, and sighed as he did so. It was wonderful to see the close warm affection of this cynical and disagreeable man for his own family—the family who gave him so much trouble, and so little of anything else. You could even see it in the way in which he dragged a big leathern armchair into the sunniest corner near the window, tossing the books which encumbered it on to the floor, and pressing his brother into it, before proceeding to rummage in a cupboard near the fireplace for wine and other refreshments. And yet all the while he knew that Philip Clive had come up to town simply and solely to give him fresh trouble by insisting on continuing a search for the woman whose widowhood and privacy he was protecting.

"Which will you take—brandy and soda, or Madeira? I've a bottle of very decent Madeira here," he went on, hospitably. "You look as if you wanted something, young man."

"Do I?" said Philip. It was the first word he had said beyond a bare greeting; and before he added more, he poured himself out a glass of stiffish brandy and water, and drained it off at a gulp. "I've had no breakfast to-day—none to speak of, that is. Nol don't ring," as the lawyer lifted his hand to a bell. "I couldn't eat if it was put before me. What do you think I have come up for?"

"As I suppose you are going to tell me, I'll save myself the trouble of thinking," said Bernard, laughing. "What?"

"I fancy I have got a clue to Averil Grey at last."

"In-deed!"

Bernard had been moving about the room, poking the fire and making it blaze brightly; but now he pulled a chair forward, his back to the light, his keen blue eyes upon his brother's face.

"First tell me how my father is," he said, cheerfully.

"The governor? O, pretty well. Sent his love and— But I was going to tell you of Averil—Mrs. Grey. Where do you think she came from before we knew her?"

"From Dr Dunn at Hastings. I thought you were aware of that."

"Of course I am. I mean before that."

"From London; at least, so the Dighys told Harriet; and I have heard Mrs. Grey say the same."

"The Dighys said they thought so—that was all. She had talked of London to them, and she talked of it to us, as though she had lived there all her life; and yet she had not—not for more than a year or eighteen months before she went to Hastings."

"How do you know?"

"Not from the Duns, though I have made close inquiries; but—"

"One moment, my dear Philip! Don't be affronted; but I thought you loved Averil Grey."

"You thought right then."

"Surely it is no proof of affection to go about making her name public, and perhaps giving people to think that she has done something wrong or disgraceful, by these inquiries about her."

"I am not affronted," said Philip, with a sort of resigned impatience in his manner, "because you don't understand what you are talking of. If you did, you would know that the very fact of my loving her as I do, would make me more than careful to guard her name from the breath of suspicions such as you describe. I represent myself as looking for her on account of some property which might be hers, and which has come to our knowledge, and which I, being, please remember, one of the clergymen of her parish, am authorized to acquaint her with. You forget that my profession—"

"Yes, I'm afraid I forgot you in your clerical capacity," Bernard interrupted; "go on with what you were saying you had found out."

"Well, it was in rather an odd way—a letter from the landlady of a lodging-house in—"

"London!" Bernard broke in; and then bit his lips for vexation at having done so.

"No," said Philip; "Southampton. Odd, wasn't it? I don't wonder you look surprised. It was in answer to one of my advertisements which had found its way on an old paper to the good lady's hands; and it informed me that a lady, whose initials corresponded with those I gave, and who had resided not long before at the 'Myrtles,' Woodleigh, had lodged with her three years previously; and that she would be happy to give me any information respecting her for—a consideration, of course. Those sort of letters always end that way."

"A consideration which regards pounds, shillings and pence more than truth," Bernard observed. "Well, did you answer this letter?"

"Yes, in person. Ah! you stare; but sitting still in that dead-alive village, when I don't even know where the person I love best is hiding, is maddening me; and I thought I could extract a larger amount of truth by *viva voce* examination than if I only wrote."

"Philip," said his brother, kindly, "this sort of thing will never do. I wondered what made you look so thin and worn when you first came in; I don't wonder at all now. Racing down to Hastings and back, ditto to Southampton, ditto to London—you will wear yourself out if you go on so."

"If I don't find Averil Grey I care very little for wearing myself out," said the curate, doggedly. He was leaning back in his armchair, a feverish glow in his cheeks, and his two hands knotted fiercely over his knee. In front of him was the window, open, with the sunlight falling on his thin face, and a fresh spring breeze from the river rumpling the light hair upon his forehead, and making a rustling disturbance among the papers on the table. Outside the sky was dappled all over with small cream-white clouds; and the birds were singing and chirruping in the Temple Gardens, where beds of crocuses and hyacinths made bands of pure pale color in a setting of dark brown earth, moist from recent rains. Every now and then little gales of perfume penetrated the dim quiet room, and made a sweetness among musty books and legal-looking documents tied with pink tape. A couple of nurses were chattering on the walk far below, and before them romped a little flock of children, gold-haired

and rosy-cheeked, whose merry voices rang bell-like over the city sounds, and made a musical accompaniment to the dialogue of the two brothers.

Bernard laid his head gently on his brother's knee. "Go on," he said; "I will talk to you afterwards. Finish your story say first. You went to Southampton?"

"And found the woman. She seems a very respectable body; keeps a nice comfortable lodging-house; and told me at once that her servant was a Lounshire girl, and comes from Woodleigh—(she's a daughter of Jane Parsons, the one that left the village five or six years ago and went to service. Don't you remember her?) Well, last Whitsuntide the girl went home for a holiday, saw the ladies at the Myrtles, and recognized them at once as having lodged with her mistress a couple of years previously. I don't think she spoke to either Averil or poor Miss Clewer; but when she went back she told the landlady of the circumstance. A few weeks ago a paper, wrapped round something, I think, came into the kitchen, and one of my old advertisements caught her eye: 'A. G., Myrtles, is earnestly requested to send her address, or communicate with the curate at Woodleigh, on a matter of great importance.' Up went Sarah to her mistress.

"'Look 'ere, m'm, this is parson's son, Mr. Philip, a looking for our lady surely. She must ha' left t' cottage.'

"'Like she's come into some money, an' he wants to give it her; or she's not paid her rent, an' he wants to get it,' said the landlady. 'Perhaps there'll be a reward offered in a later paper.'

"So they set to work and ferreted out the rest of the back numbers after that advertisement, found that one where I begged any one who knew the present address of 'A. G., late of Myrtles, Woodleigh,' to send it me, in order that I might communicate with her on business to her own advantage; and forthwith wrote the letter to me I mentioned to you. I went down to Southampton straight, expecting to find Ave il there; or at all events to learn where she is; and found that after all they knew no more of that than I do—indeed she knew very little at all about her."

"Ah!" said Bernard, "I thought not. I have no doubt though she made as much of it as she could, in order to fleece you to the greatest possible extent. Well?"

"Well, the first thing she said was that when Averil and her cousin came to her they had only just landed in England, and brought a French maid with them: a middle-aged woman. Mrs. Rendall said, 'not one of your flighty French damsels,' but a decent grave body, extremely reserved on the subject of her mistresses, and speaking very bad English when she spoke at all. Still the woman doesn't live that can refrain from gossiping altogether, and *manzelle*, as Mrs. Rendall called her, did let out that she had never been in England before; and that she had been Averil's maid for the last ten years—since madame was quite a young girl, she said. She was almost broken-hearted then because she was going to leave her, but madame's circumstances would no longer allow her to keep a lady's-maid, and therefore she was going to set up a milliner's shop in London. 'I can at least make the bonnets of madame,' she said. Now, Bernard, why did Averil never tell us that she had only recently come to England, and had lived in France for years?"

"We have not heard that the latter was the case as yet," said Bernard, quietly. "You jump to conclusions on slender premises, Master Phil."

"Why, have I not told you that the maid was French, had never been in England before; and that, though most of the labels on the trunks had been torn off except the last ones, 'Cork to Southampton,' one still remained, and bore the name of a French town?"

"What town?"

"That is just what Mrs. Rendall forgets. She says she couldn't 'perounce' it at the time; but it was in three words, and the middle one was 'sur.' *Manzelle* had most likely got the box, though, for it was one of hers; and *manzelle* could most probably give me Mrs. Grey's address now; for she knew everything about her mistress, adored her, and confided to Mrs. Rendall that madame was an angel, and had suffered terribly from her husband during his life. In what way, or what he was, *manzelle* wouldn't say, having evidently been bound to secrecy on that point; but she evidently hated him, groaned and crossed herself at the mention of his name, and said that it was well for madame and every one connected with her to forget that he had ever existed. Mrs. Rendall said that her mistress, being so handsome, would probably get a better hus-

band before long; but mamzelle only groaned and crossed herself again, and said it would be well if Heaven were so kind; but that miserable one would stand even in the way of a better match. Now, Bernard," said Philip, breaking off with a glance of triumph, "do you see what I am coming to?"

"Not exactly, I confess."

"Then the same idea has not flashed across both our minds."

"Mine is perfectly idea-less—not a flash in it."

"You are joking, as usual," said Philip, angrily. "And yet you might take some slight interest, even in a matter uninteresting to yourself, when you know that it is life and death to me."

"And do I not?" Bernard asked. "You might laugh all day, and I should not doubt your interest in Averil Grey. It is deeds, not words, Phil, which prove a man's feelings."

"I beg your pardon, old fellow. It is good-natured of you to give up your work for me; but, you see, I've got half crazy about this, and I thought that if I told you all I heard, and just how I heard it, the same notion might strike you as has struck me?"

"And that is?"

"That Mr. Grey—if that is the real name—has done something, committed some crime, by which he has incurred the severest penalties of the law; and that Averil, having escaped from the scene of his shame, is sacrificing her whole life to the memory of it, lest in any way it might be brought upon the heads of others, more especially others who had been kind to her—who loved her, and who, she knew, were proud to a fault of their own good name and stainless antecedents."

Philip had leant forward, his face flushed, his voice quick and low. Bernard drew back, his lips tightly compressed, and his eyebrows drawn together, like a man who has just had a totally new idea suggested to him, and does not know how to take it; or whether to take it at all."

"The severest penalty of the law is death," he said at last. "That means hanging; and hanging means *murder*! Philip, is it likely?"

"It is not unlikely. Think how often murder is committed, and through how many causes—jealousy, passion, what you

will. Indeed, Mrs. Rendall said to the maid once, 'Why, you couldn't seem more in 'orror of your pore master if 'ed murdered anybody;' and the woman looked dreadfully frightened, and begged Mrs. Rendall not to take up what she had said, or think of it any more, or madame would never forgive her. And after that she would never say a word more on the subject. But, Bernard, I don't say he has been hanged, mind you, though it is not impossible. He may have been only sentenced to imprisonment, and died before his time was out; or he may have escaped, and died in hiding. There are many more disgraceful crimes than murder, and yet gentlemen have committed them. But to think of Averil, so pure and dignified, bound to the memory of a felon!"

"Thinking of it, and of her," Bernard observed, "I should almost have thought such a fate would have killed her. Greater pride I never saw in any one than in that gentle widow lady."

"Ay, and that pride has made her fly from my love, lest in blessing her it might injure me!" cried Philip, his eyes flashing. "Kill her! No, hers is too great and strong a soul to droop and die under the disgrace of a worthless husband. She would put it from her, and bury it out of her own remembrance, and everybody else's ken. Bernard, I never cared to find her before as much as I do now; for I never felt before that she loved me as much as I do now."

Bernard had risen, and was pacing the room as if in deep thought. He stopped short at this, and spoke abruptly.

"Do you feel—you have lived in the house with her, you ought to know—do you feel as if she were a truthful woman—a woman who would not tell a lie on slight occasion?"

"I am sure of it. See, even in this. She has been silent altogether as to many things she might have told us. Of some others she has said when questioned, 'Do not ask me; I cannot bear to talk of that;' but she has never told us an untruth yet."

"You asked her if she loved you," said Bernard; "did she say 'yes'?"

There was no answer.

"Did she even keep silence? or did she say 'no,' most distinctly, and repeat that 'no' both by word of mouth and letter? Philip, I agree with you that Mrs. Grey is a

truthful woman. I do not believe that she would lie on a point like that!"

"There is no need for such a strong word as 'lie,'" Philip said, his face flushing angrily. "It is perfectly well known that nine women out of ten think themselves privileged to use some little prevarication on the subject of love."

"I agree with you; but none the less I hold that in this case Mrs. Grey was the tenth. After all, you see, I have a higher opinion of her than you, Philip—in this matter, at least."

The last words came as an after-thought, spoken very low, and with so strange a look—a look half of pain half of annoyance—that Philip, gazing at him, asked, involuntarily:

"What are you thinking of?"

"I would rather not tell you," was the unsatisfactory answer. "Wait a moment;" and he came back to the table. "Let us put in a few words what you have told me.

You believe from all you have gathered that Mrs. Grey—that being probably a feigned name—loves you as you love her; but that she has denied her love and fled from you because she knows that your family, who have been kind to her when she was in sore need of kindness, would never consent to your marrying the widow of a man whose life had been publicly disgraced?"

"Yes, I do," said Philip, decisively. "And I believe" (rather reluctantly) "that she cared so much for him—hang him!—that she would submit to any present pain herself rather than be the one to expose the misdeeds for which she, as his wife, has suffered."

"And I believe," thought Bernard, turning from his brother's earnest face, "that this man that she has cared for, cares for still so dearly, has been the cause of the misdeed for which she has suffered, and suffers still—God help her!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A PRETTY YOUNG LADY.

4 TALE OF HOME LIFE.

BY THEO. GIFT.

CHAPTER XV.

"FEMME VARIE."

BERNARD CLIVE did not say the suspicion aloud. It pained him even to think it, liking and respecting Mrs. Grey as he did, and knowing full well how hopeless to remedy such a sorrow, if he were right, must needs be in the life of any honorable woman, more especially of a woman as proud as Lady Vanborough's companion. It were little matter, then, whether she loved or did not love his brother, in so far as the futility of that love was concerned. Bernard himself, a man ultra-particular in all things connected with womanly delicacy, felt that however kindly he might feel towards Mrs. Grey, he could never wish to see her his brother's wife—never give her as a sister to his own wife under such circumstances. It would not be well to link her name with the old one of Clive. He thought of her hasty yet determined flight from Woodleigh, and the suspicion strengthened. He thought of the sudden vehemence, so unlike her usually calm manner, with which she had declared that she would not take the post of governess to any motherless child; and it grew into a certainty. Yet withal remained his original conviction that she did not love Philip—that her love was indeed where she stated it to be—in the grave of another; and on a hint he spoke. As to the suspicion, which pained and disappointed him to think of, he would not have uttered it in words to save his own life.

"Look here, Philip," he said, sitting down, and laying his hand affectionately on his brother's knee; "you've had your say, and have suggested a new idea as to the cause of Averil Grey's flight from Woodleigh—an idea which I grant you is not impossible, and which may be—mind I only say may be—the fact. Still, and granting all this, listen to me for one minute. Is it fair—is it kind or manly, to insist on pursuing a lady who has given up a comfortable home, friends who valued her, and the peace and respect so dear to every womanly

woman, simply to escape from a love she could not return, and would not have thought it right to accept if she could? Would she have taken the trouble to leave the rectory and seek out a new home, cutting off every clue that would trace her, as she did, unless she had good reason for it, and unless it were her fervent desire to be left unmolested? Surely, if you care for her, her wishes and her will should count for something even against your own! Philip, I am disappointed in you."

"Care for her! Care for Averil Grey!" cried the curate, unheeding his last words. "Why, man, if you knew what love was, you would never use so cold a word in speaking of my feelings with regard to her. I love her, I tell you. I love her as never man loved woman before!"

"You tell me so. Yes, and I do not believe you! Now, Philip, please not to fly out. I believe that you think you do; but you are wrong. What you do love, and love as men have often loved before, is yourself, and your own gratification. That is centered at present in the possession of Averil Grey; and to satisfy that, you put her feelings, her wishes, and even her happiness entirely on one side."

"Excuse me," Philip said haughtily, an offended flush upon his fair proud face, "I am vain enough to hope that her happiness would be increased, not diminished, as my wife."

"You hope so, and she thinks the contrary. It may be unflattering; but which is the older and more experienced of the two? Philip, if you do love this woman, be unselfish. Believe me, she is old enough and wise enough to know what is best for her happiness, and herself. Granted even that her husband was unworthy of her, have not women loved unworthy men before now? Ay, and loved them more warmly and faithfully than if they had been angels of light!"

"She told me that she loved him," said Philip Clive, sulkily, "and I believe her; but—"

"And she also told you that she did not love you," put in Bernard. "Why don't you believe her then?"

"Because she had not had time," Philip said, excitedly. "If I could only find her, I would soon teach her to—make her love me."

"Make her! Philip, if I were not so sorry for you, you would make me laugh. Do you think women can be driven to love like cattle to water, and forced to drink of it? Do you think a woman like Averil Grey is to be coerced into affection which her own heart does not prompt? You can make her despise you if you like; and you will do it. You can make her hate you if you like; and you will do that also; but love—"

"I won't listen to you," Philip broke in, passionately. "I wonder I have stood so much and so patiently already. Love! What do you lawyers know about it? That it is a word of four letters, and indirectly connected with breaches of promise and divorce cases, I suppose! I forgot that it was not in you to know what love or passion meant. Bah! I don't blame you. There are men who can't go beyond a certain mild, well-regulated, warm-watery affection; and it's not your fault if you're one of them. I ought never to have spoken of Averil to you; but I thought you might at least feel sufficiently with me to help me. It seems that you don't."

"I am afraid not," said Bernard.

He did not speak angrily; but Philip sprang up in indignation.

"Then you refuse?"

"To help you to follow a lady who has set me the example of refusal? Yes. I am sorry to be obliged to do so; but—"

"I believe that you are in love with her yourself," exclaimed Philip, white with anger, and tossing about the papers on the table with a quivering hand, on which the veins stood out like blue cords.

"You forget that it is not in me to know what love is," retorted his brother as coolly as before; but then he got up and laid his hand persuasively on Philip's arm.

"Don't let us quarrel, and about a woman," he said. "If I am not a sentimental fellow, and don't understand what passion and that sort of thing means, make allowances for me as I do for you. You think one thing, and try to persuade me into it; I think another, and try to persuade you into that. You won't give in to me, because

your feelings are too strong for you; I won't give in to you, because my opinions are too strong for me. I don't quarrel with you; don't quarrel with me. Sit down and shake hands."

"Thank you," said Philip, smiling bitterly, his hand trembling still as he hastily thrust them into his gloves. "If my feelings were as cold-blooded as your opinions, I might sit down. As it is—But quarrel! O dear! no. Why should we? I asked a brotherly kindness of you, and you refuse it. I don't mean to quarrel with you; but if you expect me to feel the same—"

"I don't," Clive answered, still speaking with perfect good-humor, but in the easy bantering way which (unconsciously) was adding fuel to the flame of Philip's wrath. "I expect you to feel very sore and awfully aggrieved, and to make yourself as disagreeable as the best of men are liable to do under the circumstances, for a time. What! Are you going?"

"To leave you to enjoy your joke in peace!" Philip said, fiercely. "Yes, I am! How does this door open? O!" And so he went out of it without a word of farewell, and letting it clang-to with a noisy bang as he passed down stairs.

"Mild, warm-watery affection," he repeated, slowly. "And from one of them! Well, well, the lad was in a passion, and—But I did think *he* would have understood me better."

The sunshine fell upon his bent head with a kindly touch, and rested on the papers tossed here and there by Philip's hasty hand. With an old-bachelor-like hatred of untidiness, he got up, and began rearranging them in their former neat piles; then turned to get his hat, with the muttered remark, "I suppose I ought to let Mrs. Grey know that he is in town," fastened the door behind him, and was just sallying forth, when he encountered at the bottom of the steps a very pretty girl in a very bright pink bonnet, and with the stamp "provincial" written in each frill of her lilac gown, and each stitch of her brand-new primrose-colored gloves.

"Can you tell me which are Mr. Clive's rooms?" she said, looking up to him with a smile naturally sweet and artificially shy, and which brought prominently into view a double row of teeth white and even enough to turn the head of—a dentist!

"No. 14, first floor up. May I ask what

"you want with him?" inquired Clive, the while his eye, skilled in varieties of woman-kind, was mentally pronouncing its verdict on his visitor's appearance.

"Country — *bourgeoise* — respectable. — Thinks herself a beauty," thought the lawyer. "Never saw her before. *Ergo*—law business. Query—breach of promise?"

Not much to his surprise—after the last idea suggested—the young woman faltered, blushed, and even showed a slight inclination to tear the tassel off her pink-lined parasol.

"I—I—" she stammered. "Do you know if I can go up—if he's at home? or—"

"I am Mr. Clive," said Bernard, sharply. "If you wish to see me on business now, I am at your service for"—looking at his watch—"ten minutes. After that I have an appointment."

The blushing and faltering recommenced, and the young woman's bonnet-strings were nervously tightened.

"O, thank you. It wasn't that, but—mother knows—"

"She has the advantage of me, then," said Clive patiently, and in nowise impressed by the combination of sidelong eyes, white teeth and rosy cheeks. For himself, he would far have preferred to have to do with the mother. "Pray go on. You wanted—?"

"O! I beg your pardon. It—it wasn't you; but—haven't you a friend staying with you?"

"No, I have not," said Clive, shortly. He was surprised now, but did not care to waste time in showing it. "Good-morning."

"Not Mr. Bellew?" She had stopped him, startled by his abruptness out of her little airs and graces, and laying her hand on his coatsleeve with a grasp unconsciously strong enough to surprise him. "He mentioned in a letter that he was coming to stay with his friend Clive at the Temple, because there was sickness in his own house. If you are Mr. Clive, you'll know about him—or perhaps there are two of the name!"

"There is no other of my name," said Clive, gravely; "and though I know Mr. Bellew, he is certainly not staying with me, or in London at all."

His surprise had passed away now in a faint shrug of the shoulders at the name of

his friend—a faint sense of disgust at the thought, "So this is the sort of thing Master Dick's visit would have entailed! Lucky for me he went elsewhere;" and he would have gone on with a nod; but the girl was not to be so easily left.

"Do you know where he is, then?" she asked; and Clive answered, "Somewhere in the country, I believe."

He had not the slightest intention of giving his friend's address.

The visitor's eyes sparkled. Her timidity was quite forgotten now.

"The country! Can he have gone down to us? Good gracious! How unfortunate if we've come all this way up here, and he be at home after all!"

"If you could tell me where 'home' is?" suggested Clive.

"Market Gosling, Loamshire," the young woman put in quickly, and with a hopelessness in her face which Clive's shake of the head dispelled.

"No," he said, slowly; "I only saw him for a few minutes before he left, but I am pretty sure he never mentioned Market Gosling; nor did I think of asking him if he were going there. Your own name is—?"

"Fanny Greypole," responded the visitor, promptly. "Miss Greypole, that is. I dare say he has spoken to you—"

"Often," said Clive, keeping, I am afraid, more to the letter than the spirit of the truth. "Well, Miss Greypole, I am sorry not to be able to give you any information about Mr. Bellew. I hope you have not come up to London on purpose to see him."

"Indeed we did," said the girl, her black eyes very doleful. "Mother would have come before, only I persuaded her not, for he said it would be bad for it to be known at home; though, if he means to act like a gentleman, it must be known sooner or later; and as he's not coming back to Oxford for a year, mother said she wouldn't wait any longer, for there was nothing to keep him from going off on the continent, or somewhere without letting us know, or settling anything at all."

"Settling?" repeated Clive, inquiringly, and then checked himself. "I beg your pardon, but I ought to tell you that I know very little of Mr. Bellew's private affairs. If he has any business to settle with you, I have no doubt that by writing to his usual address you will receive an answer."

Miss Greypole nodded angrily.

"If I don't, mother says she will go to law, and mother's not a woman to be played with. She says her daughters shan't be left to go a-begging through any one's nonsense; and, you know, a man really ought to stand to what he says."

"Undoubtedly," said Clive. He looked at her more narrowly as he spoke. Despite the over-fine clothes and dubious presentation, instinct told him that his first idea was the correct one, and that the young woman was as "respectable" as she was plebeian; and told him likewise that under the vanities and affectations incidental to her age and position, there lurked a certain amount of shrewdness and determination which made her somewhat interesting to a student of human nature. If Dick, among his numerous little games, had chosen to play with the affections of this young woman, she was not one, Clive thought, to let him go scot-free and rejoicing, as other girls had done, and hid their broken hearts in shame and silence. A sort of presentiment of evil to Mr. Bellew, and through him to Kate and the rest of the family, came over Clive as he stood looking down on the gorgeous bonnet and primrose gloves, and made him, despite his impatience to get to Lady Vanborough's, delay to ask:

"If I can get his address, would you like me to write and tell him of your call?"

"I'd rather you sent me the address, and write to him myself. I think he'd mind me better," was the frank answer.

Clive smiled.

"Very likely; but I am afraid I can't do that," he said. "To give a person's address to a stranger without authority to do so would be taking a liberty which, if taken with me, I should certainly resent."

Miss Greypole pouted.

"It seems to me," she said, looking up with an odd mixture of bashful sauciness and the shrewdness Clive had detected, "that mother is right when she says men always *resent* straightforward dealings where a woman is concerned."

"In individual cases I've no doubt your mother is perfectly right," Clive answered, composedly.

"And Dick's afraid of mother. She knows it, too," Miss Greypole went on.

"I have no doubt of that either," said Clive. "Your mother is evidently a remarkable woman. Now, as my time is precious"—he made another movement to go,

and at the same time Fanny Greypole came nearer.

"Tell him then," she said, low and hurriedly, "that we are at No. 11 Praed Street; over a china shop it is; and tell him mother's set on speaking to a lawyer, without he writes or comes up to settle something nice and fairly. I'm not sure she won't see one if he delays the least. Tell him so, please."

"Most certainly I will," said Clive. "Now, good-morning, Miss Greypole, and allow me, as a lawyer myself, to suggest one thing to you as a sensible woman. Don't take any rash steps in anger. Law is a ticklish thing, very easy to set in motion, very difficult to stop again; and given at times to rebounding on those who play with it."

He lifted his hat as he spoke, and went away swiftly. Looking back after he had gone some distance, he saw the pink bonnet and primrose gloves in close juxtaposition with an older, more soberly attired woman.

"How has he got into that girl's hands?" Clive thought. "And what can she be?—lodging-house keeper's daughter, or lady's-maid? Too blunt for the latter, I fancy. Surely he can't have been fool or mad enough to marry her privately; or is it my first thought, after all—a breach of promise case? It seems incredible even for him, with a widowed mother and all those young sisters; but it doesn't look like anything worse. Her manner is too honest and confident of being in the right. Upon my word, that young scamp deserves to be horsewhipped. Fancy Kate's family name dragged through the law-courts! and yet the alternative of such a sister would be almost as bad. Well, I can but write and warn him. It seems to me that everybody's affairs are crowded on my head."

He had jumped into a hansom, and was at Lady Vanborough's door by now; so dismissing the man, he inquired if she were at home; and being answered in the affirmative, was shown up stairs to the drawing-room, where Lady Vanborough was at that moment engaged in a desperate struggle between the piano, two professional violins, and an amateur flute. The babel of moans, wails, squeaks and crashes proceeding from the tortured chamber might be better imagined than described; and in the middle of the infernal din, calm and serene as usual, sat Mrs. Grey, the white border of her widow's cap and line of golden hair bent over some work, on which her mind appeared to be concentrated to the exclusion of all else.

"Don't speak to me," said Lady Vanborough, spasmodically. Her head was almost level with the keys, and her arms going spread-eaglewise, like a galvanic windmill. "Don't come near me for your life. One, two, three. One, two, three—three. For goodness' sake, Mr. Whistleboy, keep some time! We are bars behind, and it's all your fault. Can't we begin again, signor?—this passage, I mean. Now, Mr. Whistleboy, one minute first. Hum it before we commence. Please hum it."

"La—l'-la, lee," began the flute-player, a lanky fair-haired youth with expansively knobby brows, which extended almost to the back of his head, and which became violently pink from nerves and bashfulness the moment he opened his lips. Lady Vanborough interrupted him with a shriek.

"Quite wrong! There. I told you so. That's where we were out. Now, do listen—La, l', l', lee, l' lee, l' lee—"

"Mais, madame, pas si vite, pas si vite!" remonstrated the first violin, a greasy little man, with spectacles and a blue chin, and with a close-cropped head like a blacking-brush.

"Halle plays it a great deal quicker," said Lady Vanborough, obstinately. "However, if we crawl, perhaps Mr. Whistleboy will manage to keep up. Call it a dirge, signor—call it a dirge, that's all, and go on. One, two, three."

"How are you, and how do you feel?" said Clive, stepping up to Mrs. Grey, and speaking low, so as not to distract the performers. "You look as if—"

"She were enacting the Christian martyr!" broke in Lady Vanborough, who possessed the most marvellous capacity for making unlimited noise herself, and yet hearing the lowest whisper from those about her, and was averse at all times to hiding her talents under a bushel. Now and then this particular one had been the means of putting certain of her friends to considerable confusion; but on the present occasion it had no such effect, as Mrs. Grey merely looking up with her calm grave smile, as though a playful child had said something saucy; while Clive (who was slightly disconcerted) preserved a greater appearance of sang-froid than usual, and answered, coolly:

"Exactly; for the Christian martyrs loved their martyrdom better than all worldly delights. Thanks for the suggestion. It hadn't occurred to me before."

"Hold your tongue, and go away, right

away, out of the room," retorted Lady Bee. "You want to make me laugh, and disgrace myself by playing as many false notes as Mr. Whistleboy is doing. Averil, take him away into my snuggery. He'd a great deal rather talk to you than to me; and when I've got through this I'll come to you. Now, Signor Bolis, once again, and give us a lead over the first fence. One, two, three!"

"Do you often have these sort of things?" said Clive, as Mrs. Grey led the way into the pretty boudoir before described. "I wonder you can stand it; but I suppose music is one of her weaknesses."

"At present; but fortunately they don't last. Music is the rage this week. The last was horses, and the next may be the stage. Sensation in any form is the real weakness."

She said it so kindly and so easily that Clive, looking into her eyes, thought within himself:

"Surely this woman could never have brought any trouble on herself by weakness, at any rate."

Aloud he answered, "You take it coolly. It would drive me mad."

"You are a man, and can carve out your own niche in life. I am grateful for a home; and so long as Lady Bee is content with making me practise with her in private, and exempts me from all public share of her vagaries, I should be the last person to complain of them."

"You are right," said Clive, gravely. "There are many worse things in life than a musical mania in a friend; and though that is bad enough, I should be glad if you need never know anything beyond."

There was a decided shade of what the French call *intention* in his tone; and Mrs. Grey recognized it at once. A faint shade of alarm came over her face; but she looked full at him, and asked directly:

"I fancied that you had come to see me this afternoon, Bernard. Have you any bad news for me?"

"Not much," he answered, glad that she had led the way, and yet feeling an embarrassment in touching on her affairs which he had never felt before; "a little worry perhaps; but I thought I had better mention it to you so as to put you on your guard. I have had a visitor to-day."

Her color faded a little; but she only looked at him. Oddly enough, it came back with a half-look of relief, when he added:

"My brother."

"Good news, young people!" said Kate, looking up from her letter with a bright dimpling smile; "Eve is better—quite out of danger, mamma says. Dottie, you may give three cheers, if you like; but don't throw your teacup over the back of your chair, my child, for we've got to pay for all we break; and enthusiasm becomes expensive under such circumstances."

They were all seated at breakfast in the little parlor of Bloom Cottage, Combe Regis, far from London sights and London sounds, from fog, and smoke, and bustle, away in the green wave-washed country, and fattening upon fresh air and sea-breezes as only young Londoners can fatten in such circumstances: even Dick sporting a *souffron* of tan in his pale cheeks.

The parlor in which they sat was long and low, the ceiling painted white, and crossed by heavy brown rafters, against which Dick always looked as if he were going to knock his head; and the walls one-half wainscot, terminating in a shelf broad enough to hold "no end of things," as Madge said, and the other half papered with a vivid pea-green representation in small squares of the sacrifice of Abel. One breadth of this, having got put in upside down, gave you at times an odd impression of being at sea in a gale; and this nautical element was carried out by the pictures on the wall, being chiefly highly-colored prints from the Illustrated News of vessels in full sail over a cobalt sea, or stranded upon a burnt sienna beach.

There were cases of stuffed gulls, squirrels, etc., so unlike life that it was difficult to imagine that they had ever figured in the flesh, that ornamented the pea-green walls; and opposite to them was a window, long and low, like the room, lattice-paned, and looking out upon a patch of garden, a flicker of almond blossoms, and a broad expanse of tumbling, tossing sea. The fireplace was very original, having a broad black wooden mantel-shelf, adorned with a concave mirror in an antique carved frame, stacks of peacocks' feathers, and hecatombs of shells, and an oven big enough to bake a good-sized loaf, and which was the special joy and delight of Madge Bellew for cooking limpets and other peculiar marine abominations.

Madge only sighed for George. Dottie was but a baby, and Kate was grown up, and didn't enjoy limpet-pies and doughnuts with the zest of George and Tom. The little girl never looked at the oven without an impatient exclamation at Mr. McKenzie for having carried off her playfellow. In one corner by the fireplace was a funny little window about two feet square, across which a Portugal laurel had grown, and blocked out all but a glimmer of green light; and in the other stood a funnier little chiffonier of some black wood inlaid with brass, and always loaded with jugs and bowls of wild flowers, books and workboxes. Of flowers, indeed, there was no lack in the room; a large soup-plate full of primroses, looking like a heap of pale sunshine, set round with dark crinkly leaves, standing in the middle of the round breakfast-table, on which hot scones, fried bacon, Melton pie, toast and marmalade made a goodly display, and contrasted amusingly with the infinitesimally small plates, black-handled knives and Britannia metal forks.

"You must really write to my mother for some silver to-day," Dick was saying; "everything one eats tastes of these confounded knives. O bother! one can't be always remembering the children. Men are not expected to talk like schoolgirls."

"What would you do if you heard Dottie say it?" said Kate, in French, that Dottie might not understand.

"Do! whip her, of course," replied Dick in English; and Dottie, who had caught her own name with infantine quickness, lifted up her innocent daisy-like face and round blue eyes to Kate, and asked anxiously:

"Nobody's doin' to whip me, is dey, Katie? Me's not done nuttin naughty, has me?"

"No, my darling; you're the goodest of the good," said Kate, kissing her; and Dottie, looking across at Dick with a sort of doubtful confidence, repeated:

"Me twite dood, Dick; doodest of dood—Katie says so."

Dick's favorite dog, a beautiful brown and white setter, was lying on the wide chintz-covered settee which nearly filled up one side of the wall, keeping guard over his master's hat and fishing-rod, which had been thrown down among the cushions; and opposite to the fireplace stood a shabby little cottage piano, which had been hired,

with some difficulty, from the nearest town, and was at present encumbered by a great heap of tangled ivy, ferns and convolvuli, gathered during an early ramble in the woods. The window stood open to let in the sunshine and fresh morning air, and the chintz curtains fluttering in the breeze, and bulging inwards, half hid, half revealed, the panorama of blue foam-frayed sea and greenish-gray headlands. There was a strange smell of salt about everything, salt and seaweeds, wild flowers and tar, which pervaded the whole atmosphere; and down upon the beach below, four or five stalwart fellows, in blue guernsey shirts and red caps, were singing, "Yo, heave ho," in rough melody as they hauled a great brown boat, flecked with foam and dripping with wet seaweed, up from the sun-flooded waters of the bay to the sun-flooded yellow sands above them.

Little Dottie, with her golden hair and rosy face, sat eating her bread and milk with solemn and somewhat sloppy energy, which diffused itself over her cheeks and pinafore in the process; but the elders had finished, and Dick, tossing the Times on the piano, gave the signal for a move by going to the window and shouting to some one on the beach to know if the "boat was ready."

"Ay, ay, zur. Gwine to bring her down now," was shouted in answer; and Dick caught up his hat and whistled to Floss the setter. Kate gave him his rod, and knotted the string of his hat securely to his button-hole. "It wont do to lose two in a week," she said, laughing; and Dick laughed too, and pulled her ear.

"That's a good girl! I say, Kittle, wont you come along too? I'm going to try Waters's new boat, and sail round Deadman's Head, and see if there's any fishing to be got in the cove. Run and put on your hat. It's a glorious day, and she's the prettiest craft going. If she only sails as well as she looks, I've a good mind to hire her for all the time we are here."

"O Dick!" broke in impetuous Madge, knocking over her chair in her haste to get to him. "Let me go too. Will you? I've got a rod now, you know, and—"

"No, no, Madge. Now don't you bother. There isn't room, and I hate going fishing with more than one girl—they do chatter so consumedly."

"But, Dick, I wont open my mouth once, I promise."

"Take Madge instead of me," said Kate, good-humoredly. "I ought to write to mamma, and she wants to go. Get your hat, Madge, and do, for goodness' sake, take an umbrella, child. You're getting as brown as a beefsteak."

"I like being brown; it's healthy. O Katie, what a delicious old trump you are!" cried Madge, tearing up stairs in frantic haste, while Kate turned to her brother and asked, "You're sure that boat is safe, Dick? Have you been out in it before?"

"No; but Waters has, five or six times. Safe of course it's safe. Is that why you backed out, Miss Kitty Coward?"

"Nonsense! But I am a coward for Madge, I acknowledge. Don't let her spring about in the boat, Dick."

"All right. Don't bother." And Kate ran after Madge to warn her that if she were not quiescent in the boat, Dick might not take her out again—a politic suggestion which she knew would have more effect than any entreaties on the score of the girl's own safety.

Left alone with Dottie, Miss Bellew sat down to write to her mother, while *la cadette* washed her doll in a soapy dish and administered dirt pills to it with maternal solicitude. It is curious to watch how early the philoprogenitive instinct commences to act in some girls, while others have grown to be wives, and even mothers, without possessing it at all. In the middle of the operation, however, the maid came in to take Miss Dottie for a walk, and the little lady, flinging her doll upon the floor, rushed to Kate's side with:

"Katie, tate me. Do, pease, Katie tarning. Me lites to do out wis oo so much."

"Do you, little one?" said Kate, good-naturedly. "All right, so you shall. Get her ready, Martin." And Dottie departed frisking with triumph, while Kate fastened her letter and ran up stairs for her own hat.

They had not gone far before Kate sat down to rest upon a heap of dry dead bracken, and sending Dottie to go and pick primroses, took a couple of letters out of her pocket, and unfolded them for a fresh perusal. The first was the one she had received that morning from her mother; and she read over again all the discursive little home details and invalid accounts, with a sigh of relief for the improvement mentioned in the latter. The other was from George, written some days previously—a mere school-

boy's scrawl, mentioning a horse-show to which he had been with Mr. McKenzie, and a new play to which the same gentleman had taken him. Beneath were a couple of lines, very frankly and cordially expressive of his pleasure in Master George's company, from the host himself; and Kate turned to these and read them over again with the same smile her mother's letter had evoked, and something like a blush into the bargain.

"What a nice hand he writes!" she thought, "so firm, and yet so neat and clear. I wish Dick or I could write like it; and how kind he is, taking George about everywhere, and pretending that it is a pleasure to himself! It is very odd, the way in which we have grown to know him better in three weeks than hosts of men whom we have known for three years and more."

And Kate closed the letter, and leaning her head against the trunk of a tree, gave herself up to dreamy musings on the peculiarities of life as exemplified in the recent acquaintanceship.

Kate had begun to think a good deal about Dallas McKenzie of late, more than she was in the habit of thinking of any man in particular, and her thoughts were not unpleasant ones. She had admired him, admired him quite unaccountably, the first moment her eyes fell on him at Mrs. de Ponsonby's ball. She had met him and talked to him when she and her mother called on that lady two days later, and again in the park on the following day, with Petre de Ponsonby, when both gentlemen found their way to the side of the carriage; and Mr. McKenzie received a general invitation to call from Lady Margaret.

I am afraid Lady Margaret was hardly a prudent woman to be the guardian of so many daughters; but there was something quiet yet fascinating—unmistakable good looks, yet joined with an unmistakably middle-aged air—which made the mother feel safe and at home after a few minutes' chat with this traveller. Besides, as every one knows, McKenzie is a very respectable name in the north of Scotland. He himself spoke of having been in the Royal Engineers when he first went abroad; and every word and tone spoke a man of education and refinement. Kate did not think her mother imprudent at all, and felt quite a little glow of indignation when Lady Bee remarked on the suddenness of this friendship with a gentleman who had dropped so lately out of

nowhere. For it was a friendship, and no one could deny it. Mr. McKenzie was continually coming to the house—once and sometimes twice a week; and then there were chance meetings in the park, and he had dined with them, and got them tickets for concerts and private picture views. Kate thought it was very pleasant, and said so openly.

"And why should I not say what I think?" she had said, when remonstrated with by a young lady friend. "There is no harm in speaking the truth as to whether one likes a person or not."

"You will be falling in love with him next," the friend said, and then Kate fired up.

"I wish you would not be always talking of falling in love. Surely a woman can like a few people without—and it is so ridiculous, as if people were not to be frank in their friendships, and proud to own and be thankful for them. Surely even if I were to—fall in love," cried Kate, growing furiously scarlet at the bare sound of her own words, "would there be anything sinful or disgraceful in it, that I should affect to deny the very merits of the person beforehand and—but all this is such utter nonsense; and indeed, please forgive me, but I think it is worse taste to suggest such things as falling in love with a person one knows so very slightly as Mr. McKenzie, than to praise him because he is pleasant and gentlemanly, and not exactly the same as other people."

After this the conversation dropped, and the friend quarrelled with Kate, which was not wholly unnatural, as for one young lady to tell another that what she says is not "good taste," is impolite, to say the least, and less easy to forgive than many an accusation involving much deeper wickedness. But this result remained, the usual one in such cases—Kate was a little shy with Mr. McKenzie the next time she saw him, and afterwards thought more of him than she had done before, and in a different manner. Previously her liking had been purely centred in certain qualities of the man, not the man himself; and it had never crossed her mind to inquire whether he were single, married or engaged. Now a personal element had entered into her admiration, and not content with liking him, she began to care for his liking her, and to be sorry for his faults, as well as appreciative of his

merits. Also she took more interest in the things he said to her of himself than all he could say on other subjects.

This was a symptom, and a dangerous one.

"Do not laugh at me: I know I am old-fashioned and backwoodsman enough to feel things more strongly than London men," Mr. M'Kenzie had said to her once; but Kate felt no temptation to laugh at him, and her eyes said so with the most unaffected candor. He apologized also to her on another occasion for his temper, having lost it altogether in a gust of perfectly uncontrolled wrath at the opera, when some man, who had evidently partaken too freely at dinner, had shown a tendency to make impertinent remarks on the ladies passing along the lobby.

"It has been the curse of my life," he said to Kate, later. "I was a spoilt child, and allowed to fly into passions for any or every cause—sometimes none at all; and see the result! A hasty temper and a hasty judgment have ruined my whole happiness, and that of those about me, and made my life desolate before I was thirty."

"But, Mr. M'Kenzie," said Kate, the sad brownish tone waking a world of pity in her brown eyes, "you are very seldom angry; and sometimes it is right to be vexed with people. You thought those men were speaking of us."

"Ah!" he said, smiling. "you are young and tender-hearted, and would find excuses where none are. I seem very seldom angry, because too late—years too late—I have learnt to strive for self-command and cooler judgment. If you knew me as I am, or rather as I was—"

And there he broke off, while Kate looked in wonder and sympathy at the careworn look which spread over his face, the great lines, never wholly absent, which came out deeper than ever on his brow. Certainly Mr. M'Kenzie was not like the other young men. They never talked to her about their temper, or told her of faults which had ruined their lives.

It might be that Mr. M'Kenzie was in the habit of making confidences about himself; but neither did this idea occur to Kate, who took it as a great compliment to herself to be thus trusted with the inner feelings of a man's life; and began to feel as if, in some sort, Mr. M'Kenzie were belonging to her in virtue of such trust; and to feel that

warm interest and sympathy for him which it was her nature to feel for all things connected with her home circle.

"I am afraid you have gone through a great deal of trouble," she said to him at once, a little fount of pity shining in her honest brown eyes; "but it is all over now, isn't it?"

"Over!" he repeated, a sort of harsh bitterness in his tone, which would have repelled her if she had not seen it was not directed at herself. "Is pain and wrong ever over while memory lasts and life remains? Only a child like you—" He checked himself there, and added, with that quick transition to gentleness which made one of the charms of his variable nature, "But it is like the innocent child you are, sweet and loving enough to care for even a stranger's troubles—troubles you could not understand if you knew them."

Now, it does not often happen in society that young ladies of the period are told in so many words, and without compliment or jest, by their male acquaintances, that they are sweet, and loving, and innocent. If men *think* it, they are sufficiently prudent to keep such thoughts to themselves. And therefore, though Kate was always inundated with compliments, the worth and meaning of which she knew too well to pay any heed to them, these simple words, spoken with such candid gravity by a man so much older than herself, sounded like the sweetest flattery in her ears, and were dwelt on with a pleasure which derived its source from the unspoken thought, "He must think it, or he would not say it, he is so frank; and if he thinks so well of me, he must like me."

He did. Kate was right. He liked her very much, but not in the way in which she was beginning to like him. He had once loved a woman passionately—had been, as he considered, bitterly wronged—and had shunned and avoided all womankind for years after for her sake. But the man's nature was not misanthropical or morose. His temper might be passionate, and his judgment hasty; but the heart behind was warm, and the inclination to love and trust indestructibly vivid.

It was Kate's frankly-shown liking for him which won him to like her. He admired her fresh young beauty, as was only natural. He felt towards her, in her own words, as towards an innocent loving child,

and found rest and pleasure in her girlish friendship. No other thought had ever occurred to him, else perhaps he had made an effort to deny himself the free enjoyment of her society and sympathy, and, for her own sake, left her to forget him and his troubled life among younger and easier-minded men. But Kate knew nothing of this; and it was with a violent and joyous start that she was suddenly roused from her musings by two

hands clapped on her shoulders; and, turning quickly round, found George at her back, and Dallas M'Kenzie standing at a little distance, smiling at her bewildered expression.

“Why, Katie, you nearly jumped out of your skin,” cried George, going off into a peal of delighted laughter at the success of his grand surprise.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]